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THE NAVY IN THE WAR  
OF 1739-48

IN 3 VOLUMES

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ADMIRAL EDWARD VERNON

# THE NAVY IN THE WAR OF 1739-48

BY

H. W. RICHMOND

REAR-ADMIRAL

VOLUME II

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## CHAPTER I

### THE BATTLE OF TOULON

WE left Mathews at Villefranche, about to proceed to Turin to take part in a conference with the representatives of the allied Powers. He reached Turin on the 11th December and had an audience of the King of Sardinia next day; on December  $\frac{14}{25}$  the various representatives met. The king himself with his minister the Marquis d'Orméa, Kaunitz the Austrian Plenipotentiary with the Austrian General Vettes, and Villettes the British Ambassador with Mathews, were the members of the conference.

The first and most urgent question was the invasion of Naples which Kaunitz was pressing upon the allies. Bent on the restoration of Naples to Austria, he desired to use the allies to further his ambition, and what he proposed was that the Piedmontese should furnish troops and the British provide a squadron to escort and assist the expedition.

Apart from the undesirability of undertaking a war of conquest—a totally different matter from the expedition referred to in Mathews' instructions—the proposal was undesirable at this juncture for other reasons. The Spaniards had an army of about 18,000 men already in Savoy, which was being joined by another now on its march through Dauphiné, and France, it was now known, had made an engagement to assist Spain with 30,000 troops who were already in Dauphiné. Thus an allied army of well over 50,000 men, would be ready to invade Lombardy in the spring. The snow in the Alpine passes would make the passage of the Alps difficult, and it was therefore nearly certain that the advance must be begun along the coast, and would be supplemented later, when the weather permitted, by a move through Savoy. The Piedmontese troops were therefore required to resist an immediate advance through Nice and a later one through the Alps.

The naval and military operations were intimately bound up with each other. The defence of Nice was of the highest importance to the sea-command, since Nice was the only defended position between the enemy and Villefranche, the main victualling and refreshing base of the squadron. If the enemy captured Villefranche, or if they occupied the surrounding hills, the fleet could no longer use the harbour. Its loss would have made the operations of blockade and observation more difficult, and it is not too much to say that the Piedmontese battalions

defending Nice were largely contributing towards maintaining the British command of the local waters. Mathews, during the discussions, went so far as to say that the loss of Villefranche would oblige the fleet to fall back upon Mahon and would thus open the sea for the transport of enemy troops to Spezia, but this was an exaggeration, and was probably used for purposes of impressing upon the allies the importance of the place. The loss of the base would unquestionably hamper the operations of the squadron, cutting off an important source of supplies and denying the use of a harbour excellently situated to control movements from Antibes; but so long as supplies could be furnished from Mahon, Sardinia, or Vado Bay, a blockade would still be possible, though more difficult to maintain and therefore less effective. The capture of Villefranche by the enemy would in fact have been serious, but not fatal; and Mathews' wish to make the point as decisively as possible can be understood.

Thus Sardinia was so fully occupied in defending her own territory and cooperating with the fleet that she had no troops to spare for an expedition for the aggrandisement of Austria. Nor could the British fleet make a detachment at this time, when the French and Spanish squadrons in Toulon were evidently making ready to come to sea. The result therefore of the conference was that both the British and Sardinian representatives declined to participate, d'Orméa taking the occasion to point out that before embarking upon conquests in Naples, the allies should devote themselves to securing their own territories against the formidable invasion with which they were threatened.

No other matters of importance appear to have been discussed. Mathews remained at Turin, completing arrangements with the King and Villettes, until the 20th<sup>1</sup> when he returned to Villefranche. Here he arrived on the night of the 23rd, and before embarking he spent three days "very busy in consequence of the multiplicity of business," which was occasioned by the certain intelligence given him by the King of Sardinia, that the French and Spaniards intended jointly to invade Nice and Piedmont. His exertions during these days were directed towards strengthening the defences of Villefranche and making arrangements for the embarkation of its garrison if it should be impracticable to preserve the place, "the King of Sardinia having in a particular manner recommended it to me that I would give him all manner of assistance to prevent from falling into the enemy's hands so great a body

<sup>1</sup> It has been stated frequently that Mathews spent most of his time at Turin. This visit, lasting from the 11th to the 20th December, undertaken for a special and important purpose, was the only occasion on which he went there. We have already seen that his ill-health was the result of 38 weeks confinement on board his ship.



of his troops as 19 battalions and perhaps more, the loss of which will inevitably endanger not only the loss of Italy but also his Majesty's whole country<sup>1</sup>."

On the 27th, having completed his arrangements he embarked on board the 'Namur,' and next day anchored at Hyères, where Lestock was lying with seventeen ships<sup>2</sup>. Here he heard that the allied fleet, though preparing with diligence, would not be ready till the end of the month; but there was no time to lose in getting in his outlying ships, some of which were as far distant as Gibraltar, others still under repair at Mahon. "Ships I want," he wrote, "but I do not know where to find them; they are all employed on stations from which they cannot be taken without prejudice to the service."

A problem which naturally exercised Mathews at this moment was the part the French intended to take. Writing on the 11th January to the Duke of Newcastle, he said: "The French have now in my humble opinion, but one game to play, viz. to put to sea alone and to go down the Straits: should they do that, it would greatly distress me for though I think myself in a condition to cope with them when all together, I am by no means in a condition to send a squadron after them and keep a sufficient strength here to save Italy<sup>3</sup>."

His position was complicated by the Brest squadron which, so far

<sup>1</sup> Mathews to the Duke of Newcastle, 25th December, 1743. *S. P. Dom. Naval.*

<sup>2</sup> Including three 50-gun ships—'Chatham,' 'Romney' and 'Salisbury.'

<sup>3</sup> Disposition of the larger ships of the British fleet on the 3rd January, 1744, was as follows:

Station	Ships of					
	90 guns	80 guns	70 guns	60 guns	50 guns	40 guns
In Hyères Road	3	6	6	1	4	—
At Minorca or on their way to Hyères	1	1	3	1	1	1
Off Toulon	—	—	—	2	1	—
Off Villefranche	—	—	—	—	—	1
On her way to join Mathews	—	—	1	—	—	—
Attending the army with Lobkowitz	—	—	—	—	1	—
Returning from the Adriatic	—	—	—	—	—	1
Cruising off Gibraltar	—	—	—	1	1	—
	4	7	10	5	8	3

In addition to the above ships of force, there were small craft off the coast of the Romagna, and in the Adriatic, as well as off Villefranche, Sardinia and Toulon. Mathews had six ships unfit or quite unready for service; so that, at this moment, he had actually available on the Riviera twenty-three ships of the line, including 50-gun ships. He was joined a week later by four more ships: 'Berwick,' 'Elizabeth,' 'Princessa' and 'Marlborough.'

as he knew, might already be at sea<sup>1</sup>, and by the fact that as France had not yet declared war he had no powers or reason to attack the French Toulon squadron if it should come out of harbour alone. Yet he felt that if it did so, it would be incumbent on him to observe its movements and to keep touch with it. The possibility would then be open that the Brest and Toulon squadrons might join, and fall upon his detached force and crush it. The situation may be compared with that in which Vernon found himself in the West Indies when d'Antin's squadron arrived from Europe, but there was this difference between the two cases. In Vernon's case a French fleet of considerable strength coming to the West Indies could only indicate an intention of taking some part, a part impossible to estimate with certainty, in the struggle between England and Spain. No other quarrel was being fought out in those waters, and direct French interests could be protected efficiently by a far smaller force. But in the case of Mathews, the Toulon squadron might be proceeding to one or more of the ports on the Atlantic coast. French ships and squadrons had met those of England at sea in several cases without attacking or interfering with them, and there was no just cause, however suspicious the movement of so large a force might appear, to precipitate hostilities in European waters by attacking it. Norris, in the Channel in 1740, had thought it necessary to ask specifically for instructions in the case of a French squadron leaving Brest and attempting to enter Ferrol, and the Ministry had indicated the line he was to take, namely that he was not to attack them unless they should endeavour to go into Ferrol; but in this case Mathews had no instructions to guide him, and the problem which might confront him was not one of preventing a French squadron from joining an enemy's squadron in an enemy's harbour<sup>2</sup>, but of a French squadron sailing from one of its own harbours and leaving its ally behind it. Uncertainty as to the French attitude prevailed in the fleet up to the day of the subsequent action, when the Captains did not even know whether or no we were at war with France. Captain Pett of the 'Princessa,' when asked at a Court Martial if he had any orders as to engaging the French, replied that if he had fallen alongside a French ship before his Rear-Admiral engaged, he would not have begun to engage her until she had first engaged him<sup>3</sup>, a reply which indicates that Mathews did not take

<sup>1</sup> He had been told by d'Orméa on Dec. 18th that it had actually sailed. The information was incorrect.

<sup>2</sup> For this eventuality he had his instructions. He was told to prevent the junction. Similar instructions had been sent to Haddock on November 11th, 1741, and these were repeated to Mathews. It will be noticed that the policy is the same as that laid down for Norris in 1740.

<sup>3</sup> P.R.O. Court Martial on Captain Pett.

his captains into his confidence and keep them informed as to the general situation.

Three days after Mathews had written his letter of January 11th, he received the news that the French and Spanish Admirals had been down to the coast together, observing the British squadron as it lay in Hyères Road<sup>1</sup>. On the same day, the 'Winchelsea,' which was watching Toulon from Giers Road, reported that 35 sail of enemy ships were lying inside the boom, with their sails bent or bending. On the 26th his agents informed him that a strong reinforcement of Spanish seamen (who being unable to come by water had marched from Barcelona) had joined the Spanish squadron; and the 'Winchelsea' reported that 22 sail of French ships, including two Admirals, were now in the outer Road. It was thus clear that some movement was about to take place, and it appeared probable that it would take the form of a joint sally of the allied fleet and a simultaneous land attack.

Still, even if the matter should be simplified by such a declared intention on the part of the French, Mathews had the Brest squadron to think of. He had heard from the Duke of Newcastle, in a letter written on the 13th January, that the frigate 'Phoenix' had seen a French squadron of 21 sail lying in Brest water on January 8th, that it was daily expected to sail for Toulon<sup>2</sup>, and that when it did so, a strong reinforcement would be sent to the Mediterranean. But Mathews could not but observe that the Brest squadron might get away with a good start and reach the Mediterranean in advance of his own reinforcement, and though he had ships cruising in the Straits of Gibraltar<sup>3</sup> with strict instructions to hasten to inform him immediately the enemy passed the Straits, it was within the bounds of possibility that the Brest ships might pass in the night and succeed in joining the ships at Toulon. In such case he proposed to retreat at once to Gibraltar, there to await reinforcements. But if he received information in time he would engage the Brest squadron. "I must," he wrote, "when I receive certain advice that the Brest squadron is entered the Streights, put to sea with my whole strength and use my utmost care and diligence to intercept them, or to attack the conjunct fleet now in Toulon should they put to sea with a design of joining the ships from Brest, the time of whose sailing they will know before me. I say, should that happen, Don Philip will

<sup>1</sup> There were twenty-seven sail with Mathews on that day, but not all of them were in Hyères as some were absent cruising to the westward.

<sup>2</sup> "We may expect every day to hear they are sailed, and in all probability with orders to join the fleet at Toulon." Duke of Newcastle to Mathews, Jan. 13th, 1744.

<sup>3</sup> 'Dragon' and 'Lowestoft' had orders as early as 8th Dec. to look out for the Brest squadron in the Straits.

pass unmolested into Italy: it must be so in the nature of things: all I shall presume to say on that head is, that I will do my best to prevent so fatal a stroke." So long as all the Brest squadron did not come he was easy in his mind as to his ability to deal with the conjunct fleet at Toulon, though he needed more small craft to deal with the expected invasion. "It's true," he wrote on January 31st, "I want a few small ships to send into the Adriatic and to line the coast of Italy to prevent small embarkations: but when I shall be joined by the ships already in the Mediterranean and do not hear any more of the Brest squadron, I shall detach all my small craft to cruise between Cape Roux and Port Especia, to prevent if possible any embarkations getting with troops, artillery and ammunition into any port in Italy."

Throughout all this time indeed, Mathews' dominating pre-occupation was for the security of Italy, and it must be remembered, when the events following the battle of the 11th February are considered, that this had been clearly impressed upon him as the main object of his operations. "You know the King's principal views and intentions in sending so considerable a naval force into the Mediterranean, viz.: the destroying of the Spanish ships and embarkations and the fleets of France and Spain acting together or in any manner aiding or assisting each other, and to assist, protect and defend the states and dominions in Italy belonging to the Queen of Hungary and the Great Duke, his Majesty's allies<sup>1</sup>." This instruction had been repeated constantly<sup>2</sup>; and now all his correspondents intimated that a move was about to be made in which the Brest and Toulon squadrons were to play some part which would allow the Spanish army to be carried into Italy. One advice from Paris<sup>3</sup> reported that, as soon as sufficient local craft were collected to carry the army, the conjunct fleet were, "in the best manner they can to employ Mr Mathews whilst their transports make the best of their way to Genoa." A later letter<sup>4</sup> reported that seven sail were to leave Brest and go to Naples to "give heart" to the King of the two Sicilies to break the agreement made with Martin, and send troops to reinforce the Spaniards with de Gages. It was calculated that if Mathews should send a squadron to deal with them, his force off Toulon would be so weakened that he would be unable to hold the conjunct fleet, and if

<sup>1</sup> Duke of Newcastle to Mathews, Sept. 30th, 1742.

<sup>2</sup> 18 Jan., 1743. To dispose the ships to prevent an attempt being made to invade Italy by sea.

<sup>26</sup> Apr., 1743. To do everything in his power to distress H.M.'s enemies and for the support of the allies and defence of their dominions in Italy.

<sup>13</sup> Dec., 1743. To provide against a reported project to send the Spanish forces by sea into Italy.

<sup>3</sup> December 3/14, 1743. Mr Thompson's letter.

<sup>4</sup> December 14/25, 1743.



he did not send any, it was certain that the Neapolitan reinforcement to the Spanish army would be provided<sup>1</sup>. A still further report stated that "however dangerous it is for the enemy to ruin their marine, they are nevertheless resolved to run the risk" of a pitched battle between the fleets in order to get the troops into Italy as quickly as possible. This would ease the French situation in Germany by obliging the Queen of Hungary to detach forces from that theatre to support Prince Lobkowitz in preserving her dominions in Lombardy<sup>2</sup>; and Austrian troops might also have to be diverted to assist the King of Sardinia to resist the French army in the Alps.

In all this diversity of opinion as to how the enemy intended to achieve their end, there appeared no doubt as to what that end was—the invasion of Lombardy by sea. Whether they could live on the country or must depend on the long line of communications for their supplies remained to be seen; but by possessing all the harbours along the coast, they would deny their use as bases of supply to the British fleet, would make the blockade more difficult to maintain, and therefore facilitate the transport of stores and men in small craft which could be moved rapidly from the shelter of one harbour to that of another, keeping inshore where their interception would be difficult.

On the 26th January, the Brest squadron put to sea. The news that it had done so reached Turin on the 31st, and d'Orméa hastened to transmit it to Mathews. The Duke of Newcastle wrote also, expressing the opinion that the squadron might either make a descent on the British coast, lie in the Channel and attack trade, or endeavour to intercept the supplies and reinforcements going to the Mediterranean. When Mathews received this news, he at once sent instructions to Minorca to hasten all available ships to join the flag at Hyères.

The enemy were indeed nearly ready, and their intention, as supposed by Mathews's Geneva correspondent, was to come out and free the way for the troops by destroying the British fleet<sup>3</sup>. It was believed by them that Mathews's fleet was weaker than it really was. When the French and Spanish Admirals had come down to the coast of Hyères to examine the British fleet in the second week in January<sup>4</sup> there were not more than 27 ships with Mathews, all of which were not in harbour. On the 3rd of February—the day the allies were ready and intended to sail<sup>5</sup>—there were no more than 28 sail with Mathews, and the 28 sail

<sup>1</sup> It appears that five or seven ships did sail from Brest early in January and went so far as Cadiz.

<sup>2</sup> Letter from Geneva. Jan. 4/15, 1743/4. Villettes to Duke of Newcastle.

<sup>3</sup> See instructions to Admiral de Court. Appendix.

<sup>4</sup> Mathews to Duke of Newcastle, 14th January, 1744.

<sup>5</sup> *Journal of M. de Lage de Cueilly.*



of clean ships which the enemy could bring out might reasonably expect to deal such a blow to the British that they would no longer be able to remain on the coast. If the fleet could be surprised before it could get out of harbour, or could be attacked as it came out, there would be an increased probability of its destruction. The allies therefore intended to sail into Hyères Road and there attack Mathews. If he should endeavour to leave by one channel as their squadrons entered, the French division was to go round and cut him off in the entrance<sup>1</sup>. Unfortunately for the allies, the wind was foul on the 3rd February, and they were unable to get out of harbour until the 8th, and when they did get to sea the northerly wind that took them out of Toulon prevented them from fetching the entrance to the Bay of Hyères. If they could have engaged the British fleet on the 3rd, they would have had no more than 28 sail to encounter; in the intervening days before the 11th, on which the battle was fought, Mathews was joined by five more large ships<sup>2</sup>.

Meantime a continual watch had been kept on Toulon from the sea by the 'Winchelsea,' who, using Giers Road as an anchorage, cruised continually off the port, and kept Mathews informed of the movements of the fleet. On the 15th January, he sent the 'Diamond' to join the 'Winchelsea,' and the 'Essex,' 50, to anchor in the Little Pass, to repeat signals and give a strengthening to the light vessels. But he was not dependent only on reports from his cruising ships. Continual advices from other sources kept him well informed as to the state of preparation of the enemy, and early on the morning of the 8th February, he received the news from one of his correspondents that the enemy were going to sail next day. He at once detached three more large frigates to Porquerolles Road, to watch and keep touch with the enemy. If the allies built on being able to surprise him, it will be seen from this how little chance they had of doing so; their best chance would lie in a W.S.W. wind that would take them to sea and up to Hyères, while Mathews would be unable to work out of his anchorage.

Between 3 and 4 P.M. on the 8th, the 'Winchelsea' sighted the enemy making sail. She quickly ran down towards the Little Pass flying a red flag, the prearranged signal to indicate that the allies were under way. The 'Essex' repeated the signal, firing guns, and the Admiral at once loosed his foretop-sail as a signal to unmoor, and sent two more heavy

<sup>1</sup> *Journal of M. de Lage de Cueilly*. M. de Lage's account of the offensive intentions of the fleet is quite borne out by their preliminary tactics on the 9th and 10th; on both of these days he tried steadily to work to windward.

<sup>2</sup> 'Warwick' and 'Dragon' joined on the afternoon of February 3rd, 'Boyne' and 'Chichester' on the 10th, 'Royal Oak' on the 11th; 'Burford,' too late for the battle, joined next day.

frigates—'Oxford,' 50, and 'Guernsey,' 50—and a barcolongo to reinforce the look-out squadron and keep him informed of the enemy's movements.

In the course of that evening Lestock went on board the 'Namur' to ask Mathews whether he had any commands for him in the expected engagement. Mathews is reported to have replied that he had not, and to have observed that it was a cold night and he wished him good evening. This incident has been quoted, with others, as shewing the lack of civility shewn by the Admiral to his second in command. It was referred to at a later time in the House of Commons, where Mathews in explanation stated that what he said of its being very cold "arose out of pure regard for the Vice-Admiral's state of health"; but this cannot be held to condone his refusal to discuss with Lestock the impending battle.

The whole of the combined fleet did not manage to get to sea. The van, composed of the French squadron, cleared the land, but the Spaniards who formed the rear were obliged to anchor for the night, and it was not until 10 o'clock on the 9th that they were again under sail. The British frigates as before informed Mathews, who weighed at the same time on a light north-westerly wind, and proceeded to form line of battle ahead with the starboard tacks on board, to work out of harbour. The wind however veered to S.W. during the forenoon, and fell very light, an easterly current ran through the anchorage, and the combined effect of these two causes was that the ships could not fetch the entrance on one board. The whole day was spent in beating over 30 large ships to windward in the restricted waters of Hyères Bay. The difficulty of the operation can be well understood. Twice the fleet had to tack in order to get sufficiently to windward to draw out of the entrance, but they were unable to get clear. Jumbled together, taking each other's wind, they drifted and fouled each other without making progress. At 3 in the afternoon, the 'Warwick' fell on board the 'Nassau' in going about and ran ashore; and an hour later Mathews, seeing that it was hopeless to work out in such circumstances, signalled to the fleet to anchor.

All that night the frigates kept touch with the enemy and signalled their positions continually by firing guns. At daylight next morning Mathews again weighed, this time with a fresher and more favourable breeze from the W.N.W. By 6 the fleet was under sail and began to form in line ahead on the Vice-Admiral's division, which, by the line of battle, was appointed to lead with the starboard tacks on board. But the flattering breeze proved disappointing. It lasted only a short while, and by the time the fleet, still in no kind of order, reached the

entrance, it had died away altogether and boats had to be hoisted out to tow the ships away from each other and from the shore, upon which many of them very nearly drifted. In going out the ships, making use of every puff, had all stood regardless of order for the entrance, and the confusion was increased by the calm being followed by a breeze from the eastward, accompanied by a heavy westerly swell.

Mid-day found the fleet nearly clear of the island, though in no semblance of order<sup>1</sup>. The 'Boyne' and 'Chichester' appeared from the eastward at this time. Arriving at this moment the reinforcement had the appearance of being providential, for they might well have run into the enemy's squadron on the 8th or 9th and suffered capture.

The wind having now established itself in the eastward, the line of battle became reversed. According to the orders issued, Vice-Admiral Lestock was to lead on the starboard tacks, Rear-Admiral Rowley with the port tacks on board. The 'Revenge' followed by the 'Buckingham,' had therefore been among the leading ships while going out of harbour, and the remainder of Lestock's division had endeavoured to form in the van. Now it became necessary to invert the line, and Mathews, after standing to the southward in a rough line ahead under easy sail, far enough to give room and clear the land, brought to at 2 o'clock to allow the rear to pass ahead of the centre<sup>2</sup>. The wind was light, the swell heavy, and the movement was naturally a protracted one.

Until about noon, when the first puffs of the easterly breeze were felt by the British fleet, the enemy held a westerly wind and stood before it towards the British, but when the easterly wind established itself, they went about and stood away, first to the southward and later to the south-westward. Mathews, fearful lest they should make away, did not wait to complete the new formation, but at 3 P.M.<sup>3</sup> made the signal for the line of battle abreast and stood towards them, steering between S.W. and W.S.W. The Vice-Admiral, to prolong the line to the northward, steered more northerly, and the Rear-Admiral crowded sail to extend his division to the southward of the centre: but though the signal for line abreast was made and kept abroad all the afternoon, the fleet did not get into a correct formation before dark. The Admiral was ahead of the line throughout the remainder of the afternoon, nor was the line formed with any regularity. This is but natural; the

<sup>1</sup> Diagram 1 shows the noon positions of a certain number of them. It cannot be taken as absolutely correct, as the time kept on board the different ships might vary; but it indicates generally the scattered condition of the fleet at that hour.

<sup>2</sup> This is the occasion when Vernon's red flag signal used at Porto Bello would have been useful. See vol. i. p. 47.

<sup>3</sup> The logs give different times for this signal, but it appears to have been made after lying to for about an hour.



The Allied Fleet, having had a light westerly breeze during the forenoon, had run down in line abreast towards the British: but by noon the breeze had failed and was beginning to come easterly, so that their heads went off to the southward. From the British Fleet they appeared to be in a well-formed line ahead. Shortly after noon, when the British bore up and began forming line abreast, steering about W.S.W., the Allies bore up also.

## THE BATTLE OF TOULON

### Diagram 1

Approximate positions of the Fleets. Noon Feb. 10th

- ⚓ A Position from which *Diamond* and *Winchelsea* observed Toulon
- ⚓ B Position of *Essex*, *Dunkirk*, *Kingston*, *Chatham*, *Feversham* when sent to support *Winchelsea*, &c.
- = Ships of Van Division | Only those whose noon
- = " " Centre " | positions are recorded
- ◐ = " " Rear " | are shewn

The weather, nearly calm, with patches of a light easterly breeze: heavy swell off Porquerolles: some ships with boats out towing clear of land and of each other.



circumstances in which the fleet came out of the harbour, the light and variable wind, the inversion of the order of sailing, all contributed towards this result. The rear—Lestock's division—was astern throughout: and it is to be observed that the Vice-Admiral did not make all the sail he could, attaching more importance to keeping his ships in correct station in their division, than to bringing the division up to its bearing from the centre. More than once he shortened sail during the afternoon to allow lagging ships to come up.

The enemy's fleet in the meantime was better formed. The French division having cleared the harbour the evening before, there was a lesser number of ships to work out of the anchorage, and the fleet was able to stretch away to the southward and form a fair line ahead before bearing away in line abreast, so that the alignment of their fleet had a better opportunity of being corrected.

At 6.30 P.M.<sup>1</sup>, the signal for the line abreast being still abroad and the enemy's fleet about 4 to 6 miles distant, Mathews signalled the fleet to bring to, for he had no wish to give hostages to fortune in a night battle. The centre division was at this time ahead of both of the others, the van was but a little way to windward, the rear a long way both to windward and to the northward.

The battle which followed next day was so greatly affected by the manner in which the fleet brought to, that attention must be given to this point. It was now just dark; the signal for the line abreast had been flying all the afternoon and had not been hauled down. No night signals for the line abreast existed, and when Mathews made the signal to bring to—four lights in the foreshrouds and the firing of eight guns—the Vice-Admiral contended that it cancelled the line abreast and that his duty was to bring to at once, regardless of whether he were in station in the line abreast. In his subsequent defence he did, as a matter of fact, argue that at the time the signal to bring to was made he was correctly on his bearing; but the evidence to the contrary is so overwhelming that, although the Court in the subsequent trial found that he was if anything to the westward, it is beyond all shadow of doubt that he was very considerably to the north-eastward of the centre and separated from it by three miles at the very least<sup>2</sup>. There can have been no doubt in Lestock's mind that his Commander-in-Chief intended

<sup>1</sup> The times at which the different logs report this signal vary. In the log of 'Namur' it is placed as 6.30; others place the signal as late as 8 P.M.

<sup>2</sup> The evidence at the Court Martial and such records as the logs provide as to the position of the Vice-Admiral's division, are so conclusive that it is difficult to understand by what reasoning the Court found otherwise. The finding is only equalled by the extraordinary partiality evinced to Lestock throughout the trial. See Appendix IV for further discussion of this matter.



him to bring to in the line of battle for which the signal had been flying since 3.30, which signal had never been cancelled. Lestock's argument was that being a day signal, it ceased automatically to be operative when daylight came to an end, and that his duty was to obey the last signal he could see. Mathews, on the other hand, expected him to stretch on and complete the formation of the line abreast before bringing to. Commenting on the battle at a later date, Rodney wrote that Lestock, "*instead of coming to in the wake of his Commander-in-Chief, agreeable to the known practice, brought to to windward*": and many of the officers of the fleet expressed their opinions that they had expected to see the rear division close before bringing to<sup>1</sup>, and by their evidence showed that there were plenty of officers who could interpret signals according to their sense and to their relation with the circumstances at the time they were made, rather than by their letter alone.

In the subsequent Court Martial Lestock produced a triple line of argument in his defence. First, that it was his duty to obey the signal to bring to immediately, and that no ship or squadron might be moved after the signal to bring his division to had been made without permission from the Admiral; next, that it was a dangerous thing to move this large body of ships at night; and lastly, that if the Admiral wished him to bring his division into line, he would have sent a boat to tell him to bring it up. The answers were obvious. Mathews replied that a commander of a division had liberty to move his squadron without asking for orders, and that if Lestock were in any doubt, he could send a boat and ask permission to move them<sup>2</sup>; that the ships could move, one following another and forming in succession on the rear—or northern end—of his division without the smallest danger<sup>3</sup>; and finally, that he, as Commander-in-Chief, did not expect to have to send orders to his other Admirals to direct them to do what so clearly lay within their powers and was so obviously their duty. For all that, it is evident that real importance was not attached at the moment to bringing to in line, and that it was only its after results that brought the matter into prominence; for not only did Rowley likewise bring the van to without waiting to get up into line, but Mathews himself, who cannot have been

<sup>1</sup> E.g. Captain Mountagu of the 'Buckingham' and Captain Long of the 'Russell,' the latter of whom apprehended "it is the constant practice for commanders not to bring to, tho' the signal for it is out till they are in their stations, and that it was particularly Mr Lestock's duty to get up as near the Admiral as he could, *because an action was expected*."

<sup>2</sup> On the point of single ships moving into station after the signal to bring to was made, Captain Marsh in his evidence said: "I think it is a very customary thing for ships to get into their proper station before they do bring to. I have known it very common for private ships."

<sup>3</sup> In this opinion the great majority of the witnesses concurred.

unaware that both his wings were astern, did not send orders to either of their commanders to rectify their bearings when he saw they were taking no steps themselves to do so. In fact, both then and at a later date, notwithstanding the statement of such high authority as quoted above, it is to be doubted that much attention was paid to the order of sailing at night. At ordinary times this mattered little, but the evening of the roth of February was no ordinary time. It was the eve of an impending battle, and every measure which could keep the fleet ready for action at the earliest moment should have been thought of and employed by the commanders.

The fleet brought to, approximately in the formation shewn in Diagram 2<sup>1</sup>, with the ships' heads to the south, the wind being about E.S.E. at that time<sup>2</sup>, and the 'Winchelsea' and 'Essex' were detached to lie on the flagship's lee beam, the former inside a mile, the latter outside her to report the enemy's movements during the night. The allied fleet also brought to after dark, in a line stretching approximately N.N.E. and S.S.W., the centre of which was nearly abreast the British centre and about three miles to leeward of it.

During the night both fleets were carried some distance to the westward, but the enemy, either on purpose or more probably owing to a difference of sail set or helm used, drifted more quickly, somewhat to the south-westward. During the same time the rear of the British fleet was set a little more to the eastward, and its position was thus rendered worse than it had been on bringing to. The currents on this part of the coast are variable and depend largely on the wind. Westerly winds had blown freshly for two days before the 11th and an easterly current was evidently running. Inshore the currents are strongest, and they weaken with every mile to seaward. The result was that the whole of the rear division experienced more current than the centre<sup>3</sup>, and was set more to the eastward, while the most northerly ships of the rear were more set than the southerly ones, and the line of bearing, which had been somewhere near N.N.W. and S.S.E. while chasing in line abreast during the preceding afternoon, was twisted to the northward and now lay north and south. The drift during the night, whether due entirely to current or to different sail carried during the night—for Lestock, though claiming to be able to do nothing without instructions,

<sup>1</sup> The positions of the ships and divisions are plotted from the bearings given in evidence and in the logs. The evidence so far as relative bearings is fairly consistent; as regards the land, the bearings are wholly unreliable.

<sup>2</sup> The wind worked round to about N.E. during the night. Lestock in his defence claimed that it went as far round as N.N.E., but this is not borne out by the logs of the ships.

<sup>3</sup> This may also have contributed to their not reaching their stations during the afternoon before.

Cape Sicie

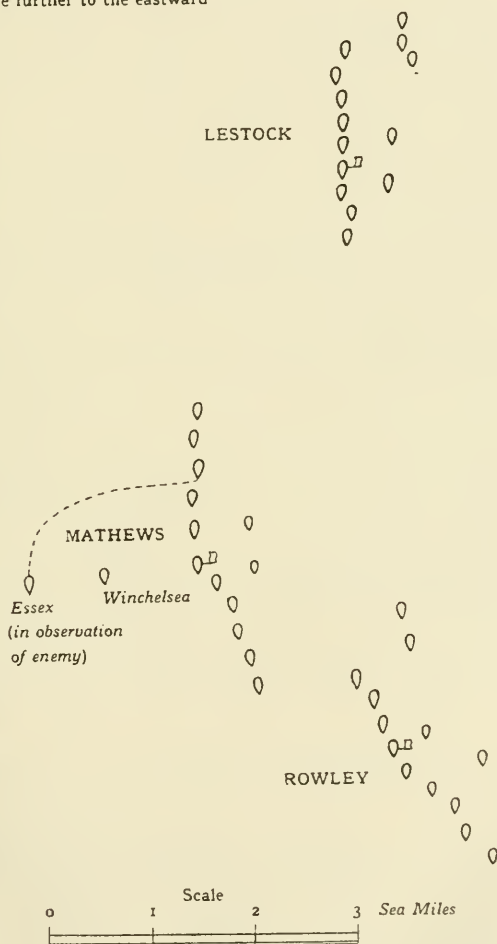
## THE BATTLE OF TOULON

Diagram 2

Sunset Feb. 10

Shewing the fleets brought to for the night. The distance between centre and rear increased during the night. The van may have been a little further to the eastward

Approximate position of enemy's line. The line appeared very regular from the British fleet and lay between the positions shewn for the van and rear ships: it was probably much less well formed than shewn, and the positions of individual ships are only put in to give a general indication of the locus of the line.



double reefed topsails on his own account—amounted to about two miles, so that by dawn the rear was even more separated from the van than it had been on bringing to. Here again arises a matter of principle: Lestock gave no orders<sup>1</sup> to keep his division in station and disclaimed all responsibility for keeping it so, whatever might happen during the night.

With daylight the British fleet made sail. The rear, which was now some 7 or 8 miles from the centre, did so first, closely followed by the centre and van—it will be observed that Lestock's reading of the powers of a junior commander did not prevent his doing so without orders—and the fleet, forming line abreast, stood to the south-westward where the combined squadron was standing to the southward under easy sail.

During the night the 'Royal Oak,' which had been endeavouring all the preceding day to join, nearly reached the fleet and all the ships of the line that were expected, except the 'Burford,' were now assembled. The lines of battle are shown in the diagrams. It will be noticed that the 50-gun ships are attached to the van and rear only and are put under the orders of the divisional Admirals to be placed against ships of equal force in the enemy's line: and here it may be remarked that while Rear-Admiral Rowley called the 'Chatham,' 'Salisbury' and 'Guernsey' into the line, Lestock employed the 'Oxford' and 'Nonsuch' as reinforcing ships to the end ship of the line, stationing them both on her quarter to support her against the 'Santa Isabel,' an 80-gun ship. The British fleet had two fireships, the enemy had three<sup>2</sup>. One British fireship was attached to the centre division and, with the repeating ship 'Winchelsea,' the hospital ship and a barcolongo, completed the light auxiliaries of that division. A fireship was attached to the rear; and both the van and rear had frigates for repeating ships<sup>3</sup>. The light frigates were also intended for use against the enemy's fireships.

Mathews made sail about 6, Lestock having already done so. Rowley quickly followed suit and hastened to get into station. At 7.30 Mathews signalled to the van to make more sail and lead large to form the line, and immediately afterwards made the same signal to the rear, and sent an officer, Lieutenant Jasper, to Lestock to desire him to make more sail. Lestock was then making sail, but not crowding;

<sup>1</sup> See the evidence of the officer of the first watch of 'Neptune.' *Q.* Were any orders given by him (the Vice-Admiral) to keep in the line of battle abreast as he was?

*A.* I received no orders, who watched till eight at night.

*Q.* Was any care taken by him to preserve the same situation?

*A.* There were no directions given to me nor anyone else that I know of. (*Court Martial on Lestock.* Other evidence confirms this.)

<sup>2</sup> 'St Pierre,' 'Vainqueur,' 'Bellone.'

<sup>3</sup> The 'Diamond,' 40, and 'Dursley,' 20, for the van; the 'Feversham,' 20, for the rear.



and half-an-hour later, not being satisfied with the way in which the ships astern of the centre were coming up, nor with the advance of the rear, Mathews sent another officer, Lieutenant Knowler, in an eight oared boat to order the ships of his own division to close their next aheads with the least delay, and also to desire Lestock to make all the sail he could and join the centre. Knowler went down the line and delivered his messages, reaching the 'Neptune' about 10 o'clock. He went on board and gave Lestock the directions he had received. "Look up Tom," said Lestock, "You see what sail I have abroad. I have all set but my studding-sails and they will be in the way." Knowler was subsequently uncertain as to the studding-sails, but the evidence goes to shew that the topmast studding-sails had been set before and later, though whether they were abroad at the time Knowler was on board is not certain; there is no doubt that the lower studding-sails were not set. Lestock in his defence gave his opinion that they would have been dangerous, and would have served no purpose; but many officers thought that the swell would not have dripped the lower studding-sail booms of the large ships—the only argument from the point of view of danger—and that the sails would have stood and would have brought the ships up quicker. Rowley's division was also to windward, and thus the attack on the enemy was seriously delayed owing to the Vice and Rear-Admirals having considered it unnecessary to bring to in line, and to the Commander-in-Chief having failed to order them to make sail when they did not do so of their own accord<sup>1</sup>.

At the same time as he sent Knowler to the Vice-Admiral, Mathews signalled for Captain Mackie of the 'Ann' fireship to come on board, and when he arrived, ordered him to prime and be in constant readiness. Mackie was told that in case any ship of the enemy should be disabled, the 'Ann's' signal would be made, and the 'Essex' and 'Enterprise' barcolongo would escort her down to the line and cover her approach. With these orders Mackie returned to his ship soon after 10 and began to make her ready for the service. Shortly after—about 10.30—the 'Royal Oak,' which had been working to get into position from the day before, joined the fleet<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> There were no night signals by which either the Admiral could give the order to the other commanders' divisions, or the latter command their divisions; but boats could have been sent to carry the orders. The night was fair and boats could have passed between the divisions.

<sup>2</sup> The following signals were made during the morning and forenoon:

6.0 A.M.	Line of battle ahead.	7.0 A.M.	Line of battle abreast.
7.30 "	Vice and Rear-Admirals' divisions to make more sail.		
8.30 "	Line of battle ahead.		
9.30 "	Ships that lead with starboard tacks lead large.		
10.0 "	Line of battle ahead.	11.0 A.M.	Engage (red flag).
11.30 "	Struck red flag. Chase.	11.45 "	Engage.

Very impatiently Mathews watched the forenoon passing by. The enemy stood on to the southward under an easy sail about three miles to leeward, the British centre steering to come up with the French centre, Mathews's intention being to attack the French flagship. Rowley, under a press of sail, drew up towards the line; Lestock gained, but very slowly. Knowler having delivered his message at 10 had left the 'Neptune' at about 10.30, yet at 11 Lestock deliberately took a reef, or two reefs, in his topsails; a slight squall was coming down at the time, but so far as safety to spars and sails was concerned, there was no necessity to reef. Mathews, who was already checking the way of the centre division by shivering his sails, settled his topsails and some of his division reefed, but this was with the object of enabling the rear to draw up, and he kept the signal flying for the rear to make more sail. Lestock, in his subsequent defence, denied that he reefed<sup>1</sup>, but added the rider that, if he did so, he was correct in following motions. The subsequent Court Martial found that if Lestock had reefed, he would have been correct to do so "as if any accident had befel the 'Neptune' from not reefing when the Admiral set the example, the Vice-Admiral must have been responsible for it." To such a point can men be led by a blind acceptance of the principle of following of Admiral's motions! The Admiral had sent two verbal messages to him to make more sail; both the intention and the signal<sup>2</sup> were clear; it is astonishing to find that a majority of officers should be found to approve this action of Lestock's, and to support it by arguments so destructive of initiative and freedom of command of subordinate leaders.

The matter of Lestock's shortening sail does not end here. Lestock claimed that his topmast studding-sails were set and kept abroad until the 'Torbay,' the 'Neptune's' next ahead, dropped astern out of her station, when they were hauled down. That is to say, he justified delaying bringing his squadron into action by the necessity of bringing it up in the exact order laid down. That this was not his real view is patent from a correspondence he had conducted on a previous occasion, in April 1742, with Captain Curtis Barnett. In the course of forming the line on that occasion one division had not got into station, and Lestock had

<sup>1</sup> The evidence that he did so is very strong; several of his division followed his motions and reefed also; not one officer gave the opinion that it was necessary to reduce sail for reasons connected with safety. It must, however, be added that Lestock's flag captain denied that reefs were taken in. See Appendix V.

<sup>2</sup> The signal was a white flag at the ensign staff. "When the Admiral would have the other squadrons to make more sail, tho' himself shorten sail, a white ensign shall be put on the ensign staff of the A.'s ship" (Instructions XII). Thus, as reefing may well be considered as shortening sail, Lestock was under no obligation to follow motions, but was distinctly ordered not to do so *Vide* "Ad-l M-ws's conduct in the late Engagement, etc., London, 1745."



reprimanded the captains for not leaving their division and hastening to join the line. One of these captains, Curtis Barnett, replied to the reprimand in justification of his own conduct, that he understood that each captain took station on his divisional commander. "(I) never knew till now," he wrote, "that it was my duty to leave the flag, or officer representing one in whose division I am, without a particular order or signal." Lestock replied by giving a supposititious case: "You are in a division; a signal for the line of battle is made: the commanding officer of that division by bad sailing could not get into the line...is it your duty to see two-thirds of the squadron sacrificed to the enemy when you could and did not join the battle?...*An Admiral in such a case would leave the bad sailing ship for one that could get into the action...*": and he concluded by telling Barnett that his divisional commander had no power to stop a captain leaving his division to join the battle. Here Lestock laid down a rule clearly, and what is more, a rule which had already been laid down by the soldier admirals of the seventeenth century. Rupert's additional Instruction of 1666<sup>1</sup> had fully provided for the case. "In case of an engagement the commander of every ship is to have a special regard for the common good, and if any flagship shall, by any accident whatsoever, stay behind or be likely to lose company, or be out of his place, *then every ship or ships belonging to such flag is to make all the way possible to keep up with the admiral of the fleet and to endeavour the utmost that may be the destruction of the enemy, which is always to be made the chiefest care.*" This excellent article, with others of Rupert's, had dropped out of the Instructions. How well it would have served in this instance is obvious. Lestock was quite aware of the spirit of the instruction: indeed, in the correspondence referred to he had even gone so far as to say that an Admiral who kept his division back for a slow sailing ship would fall under the 12th article of war, which dealt with those who forbore from engaging<sup>2</sup>.

This however does not complete the tale of Lestock's conduct. At a later hour he took in his topmast studding-sails, and justified his action in so doing by the argument that it was improper to go into action with them set, "the old practice having been to furl the mainsail to prevent the firing the ship." Yet in spite of this being the accepted practice, Forbes in the 'Norfolk' crowded into action with his mainsail set so as not to be out of station: and moreover, at the time Lestock took in his studding-sails he was still at least three, more probably four,

<sup>1</sup> See Fighting Instructions, N.R.S. vol. XXIX. p. 129.

<sup>2</sup> Rodney, writing at a later date about Lestock's behaviour, said "Had any Captain under his Command acted in that manner (i.e. delayed getting into station) he would certainly have broke him."

miles from the enemy, and a full hour and more must elapse before he could be in action with the nearest Spaniard.

While the commander of the rear division was behaving in this perverse manner, the French were playing with the squadron. Till about 11 they proceeded under an easy sail—topsails and staysails only—and found they could do as they liked, having the heels of the British fleet. When Mathews shortened sail for his rear to come up, the French shortened also, but still went ahead; and when he once more made sail, the French made more sail. When Mathews steered to close them, they bore up, kept their distance, then drew ahead again. These alterations had the effect of throwing out the allied line. Though the French fairly preserved their distances, the Spaniards, less well drilled, soon began to straggle through not making sail quickly enough, and two gaps began to open up in the Spanish line, one between the second and third Spanish ships, and another between the 'Real's' second astern and her next in the line. The former gap was about three-quarters of a mile, the latter nearer two miles long.

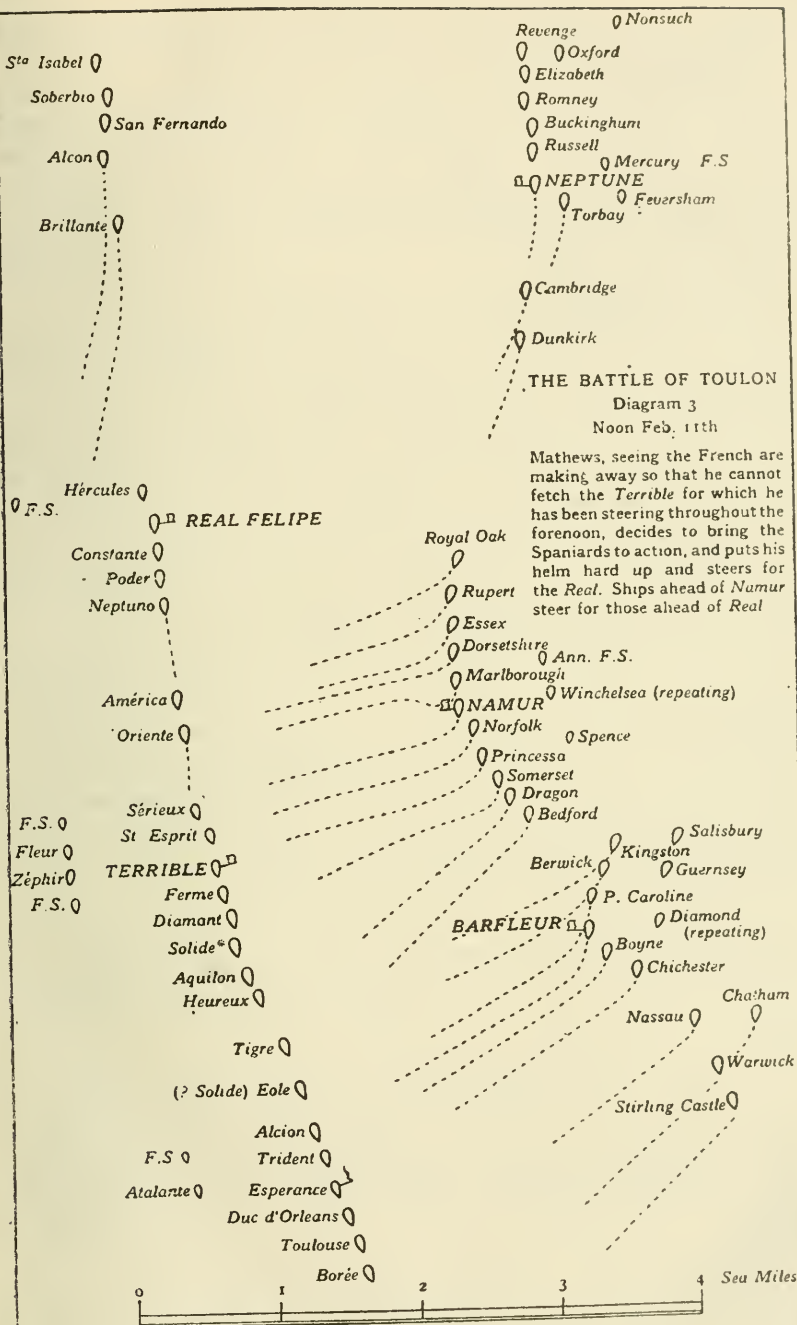
At 11 Mathews hoisted the signal to engage, a red flag at the main. He kept it flying for a quarter of an hour and then struck it and hoisted the signal for the line in its place. He was now getting very uneasy, for he could see no possibility of bringing the enemy to action, and the tactics which the French were employing convinced him that their intention was to avoid fighting and to entice him away from the coast so as to permit the invasion of Italy to take place behind his back.

The situation of the fleets at this time<sup>1</sup>—between 11 and 11.30—was as follows. The combined fleet was standing a little to the eastward of south, steering by the wind, which was east to E. by S., with the French line in good order, but the Spanish somewhat drawn out as described already. The British centre, in fair order, was about three miles to windward and nearly parallel to the enemy's line and a little in advance of its centre, the 'Terrible' rather before the 'Namur's' beam and the Spanish flagship on 'Namur's' quarter. The van was still to windward of the line, the more northerly ships being nearly up to the line of the centre, but those to the southward of the 'Barfleur' were stretched considerably to the eastward<sup>2</sup>. The rear was both to windward and astern, so that fully three miles separated its leading ship—'Dunkirk'—from the rear ship of the centre<sup>3</sup>. The wind was light and the centre was not going better than two knots, and there appeared small probability that the Admiral would be able to form his line in a

<sup>1</sup> See Diagram 3, showing the position a little later, but not materially different.

<sup>2</sup> The 'Warwick' at this time records that 'Barfleur' bore on her beam.

<sup>3</sup> Many witnesses at the trial stated that the distance was as much as 5 miles.



sufficiently advanced position to enable it to bear down as one body, with the van ships steering for the van of the enemy.

Mathews had now before him the choice of at least three things. He could wait for the rear to come up, and when his line was formed, engage in the prescribed manner; or he could crowd sail in the centre and van, leaving the rear behind, and try to fetch up to the centre and van of the enemy and engage them, trusting to the rear coming up in time to bring the Spanish rear to action; or he could bear down at once and cut off the Spaniards.

So far as the first alternative was concerned, he was influenced by the information he had as to the intentions of the enemy to draw him away from the coast. The rear was coming up so slowly that there was little probability they would be joined in time to fight on that day and the fleets would then stretch further away from the coast during the night. Mathews felt he would be playing the enemy's game if he fell into what he considered was a trap, and permitted himself to be enticed away from the coast. The longer the enemy could keep him thus employed, the better would their ends be served, particularly as the winds being easterly he was running to leeward all the time and would have the harder task to regain his station. Besides this, there was the Brest squadron to consider. One of the last pieces of information he had received before quitting Hyères was that this squadron was coming to the assistance of the allied fleet, and the enemy might now be declining an engagement until they should be joined by that reinforcement. Where that squadron might now be he could not tell, but if it were coming to the help of the combined Toulon fleet, the sooner he brought the latter to action the less chance he gave for the junction to take place. Even a night's delay might be of supreme importance.

So far as the second alternative was concerned, he would, by adopting it, run the risk of separating his fleet, with the added possibility that he might not be able to come up with the French. The proceedings so far had shown him the French had the heels of him; if he should have crowded sail, it lay in their power to do the same and to draw away from him as rapidly under studding-sails as they did under topsails and courses. The Spanish ships in the rear were clean ships and might draw away as fast as the French, and the British van and centre might find themselves separated still more from their rear and engaged in a Horatian combat with the whole of the three divisions of the enemy.

The third alternative, to bear down and attack the Spanish rear, had fewer inconveniences. It presented the great tactical advantage of throwing a superior force on to a portion of the enemy. The French



would then either have to leave their allies to their fate or go about and come back to their help, in which case a general engagement would be brought about, and the evasive tactics, whether their object were to draw him down into the jaws of the Brest squadron or to favour the transport of the Spanish troops to Spezia, would be rendered ineffectual.

Pacing the deck with the master, he remarked: "The French go from us with their topsails and if we do nothing to-day, we shall do nothing to-morrow, for I am sure they will run from us": and turning to Captain Russell, his flag captain, he said: "Look you there, if I engage the Spanish Admiral, if the French have any inclination to engage, it will oblige them to shorten sail and bring on a general engagement. If not, I shall cut off the Spanish squadron and Mr Lestock will take up the ships astern<sup>1</sup>."

With this idea in his mind, he went into the stern gallery with Russell and hailed Captain Cornwall of the 'Marlborough' who was close astern. After greeting him, Mathews asked "What do you think of Mr Lestock's being so far in the rear?" "I think," replied Cornwall, "he is too far astern to come up and engage this afternoon before six or seven, and we shall lose all the joy of the day," and added "we have the 'Real' here to leeward and we can cut her off and those Spanish ships astern." On this Mathews decided to attack the 'Real' at once, and telling Cornwall he was going to do so<sup>2</sup>—the time now was within a few minutes of noon—he put his helm hard up, shivered his mizen topsail and set his foresail, and bore down dead before the wind for the Spanish flagship. The 'Marlborough' did the same; Cornwall put his helm hard up and brought the wind on his starboard quarter so as to open the distance slightly between the two ships, and when a little abaft the beam of the 'Namur,' bore up again and ran down with her for the Spanish line. The subsequent movements of the van centre and rear will best be followed separately.

So far as the ships of the centre division ahead of the 'Namur' were

<sup>1</sup> Evidence of Mid. R. Kirby, Mathews's aide-de-camp.

<sup>2</sup> There is a slight divergence in the accounts as to what Mathews said to Cornwall. According to Mathews himself he said *he* was going to attack the 'Real.' Other witnesses stated that he told Cornwall to attack her, and said he would assist: "The Admiral hailed the 'Marlborough' and told him to bear down to the 'Real' and he would second him" (*Evidence of Wm Skyers*, coxswain of the barge). "Why then, Captain Cornwall, do you bear down upon the 'Real' and I'll follow you" (*Evidence of Lt St. Hill* of the 'Marlborough'). "The Admiral went aft to the gallery and called to Capt. Cornwall and said he believed the only way... was to begin with the 'Real'" (*R. Kirby*, Mathews's A.D.C.). "Well, Cornwall, do you bear down and attack the 'Real' and I'll be your assistant" (*Evidence of John Baptista*, pilot of 'Marlborough'). Mathews's intention appears to have been that both ships should tackle the 'Real' together.

concerned, the problem as to what they should do was not difficult<sup>1</sup>. There were five ships in the British line ahead of their Admiral, and there were five Spanish ships ahead of the 'Real.' Each ship therefore had her opposite, and so soon as they appreciated that Mathews was steering for the commander of the Spanish rear instead of for the commander of the centre they had only to bear up and engage them. Their captains grasped the situation at once<sup>2</sup>. Captain John Forbes in the 'Norfolk,' the 'Namur's' second<sup>3</sup> ahead, followed suit immediately and engaged the 'Constante,' the 'Real's' second ahead, a very few minutes after the 'Namur' got into action. The 'Princessa,' Captain Pett, bore down on the 'Poder,' the 'Somerset' on the 'Neptuno.' The 'Dragon' and 'Bedford' rather later bore down towards the 'América' and 'Oriente,' but these ships being a full mile ahead of the 'Neptuno' the two British ships could not bear down so freely, and going upon a lasking course were longer in coming into action. These two Spanish ships, crowding sail to join the French, thus received no more than a few shots from their opponents of the British centre division.

The 'Norfolk' engaged the 'Constante' most warmly and after about an hour and three-quarters drove her out of the line. Forbes however did not feel himself free to pursue the Spaniards in consequence of Article 21 of the Fighting Instructions. "We in the 'Norfolk' bore down and engaged the Spanish Admiral's second ahead 'til we made her sick of it and to take to her heels with all her sails abroad; not daring however to follow her, but compelled to keep in the line of battle—a great uneasiness to our brave captain, all the officers and men, to continue in this manner idle spectators<sup>4</sup>." The 'Princessa,' Captain Pett, was less fortunate. As she came down she, like the ships astern of her, received the raking fire of the Spanish line. She was badly cut about aloft, and when she rounded to within half musket shot of the 'Poder<sup>5</sup>,' her mainmast, foretopmast and mizen mast were shot through and her main topsail was split from clew to earring. The 'Poder' ran ahead of her, and Pett, in order to overhaul her, got his main tack aboard. This threw the 'Princessa' up into the wind, and although her captain hauled

<sup>1</sup> See Diagram 4.

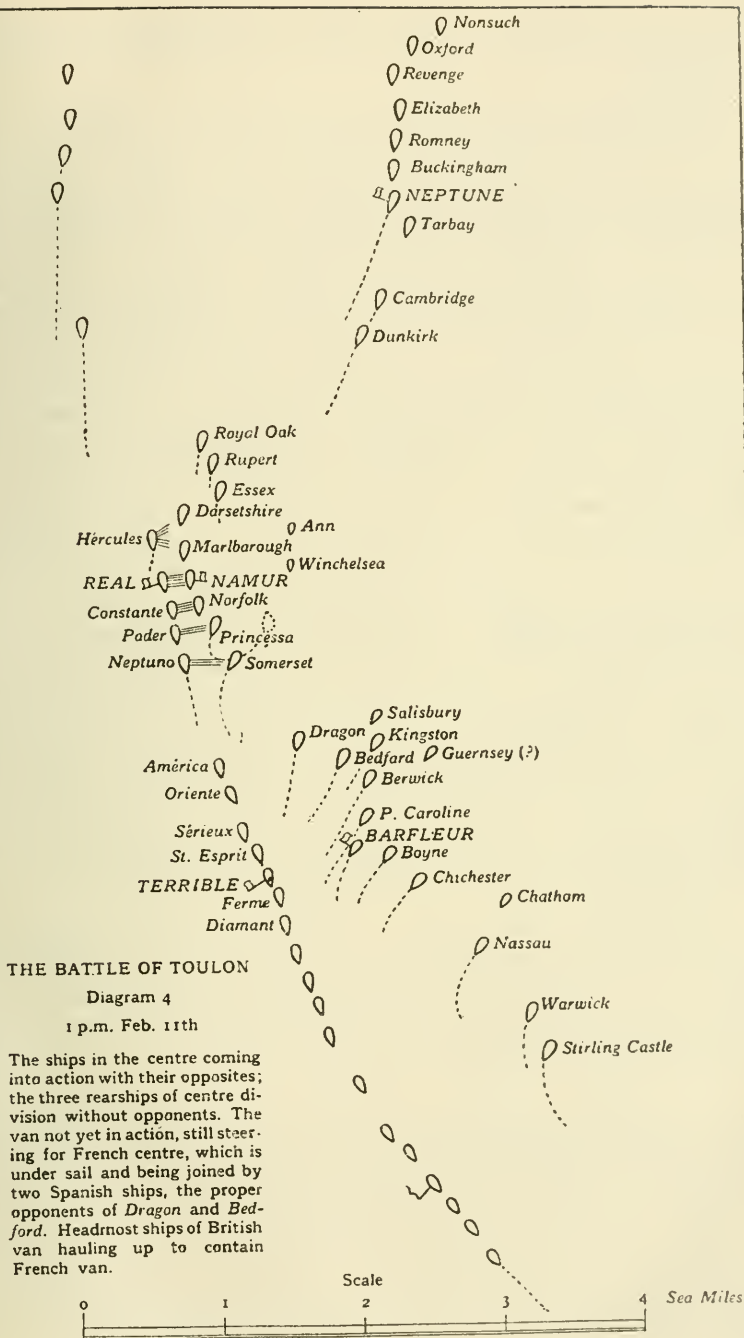
<sup>2</sup> An addition to the first article of the Instructions, made by Mathews, ordered all ships to keep station upon the flagship. This gave their captains the necessary clue as to what to do.

<sup>3</sup> The ships on either side of the flagship are referred to as her seconds; and great stress is throughout laid on the duty of the seconds constantly to support the Admiral.

<sup>4</sup> *A Journal from on board His Majesty's ship N—k.*

<sup>5</sup> Hawke gave evidence that the 'Princessa' engaged the 'Poder' "within half musket shot and very near," and that she ran down as far as the Admiral. Six of the twenty-four wounded were struck by musket balls. The small loss in men was due to the high firing of the enemy, of which Hawke also gave evidence.





up his mizen, shivered his mizen topsail and flattened in his head sails, she fell off on the other tack. She was thereby thrown out of action for the time.

Captain Sclater of the 'Somerset' stood for the 'Neptuno,' which was about half to three-quarters of a mile ahead of the 'Real.' He engaged her so closely, at about musket shot, that the Spaniard after half-an-hour's engagement got her tacks aboard and made sail, at the same time bearing up and running out of the line. She drew rapidly away from the 'Somerset,' who followed her a short distance, but seeing the 'Poder' astern disengaged, owing to the disablement of the 'Princessa,' Sclater backed his main topsail and awaited her, engaging her warmly when she came up until the Spanish ship's foretopmast was shot away. The 'Poder' thereby threw up into the wind and passed under the 'Somerset's' stern, subsequently making a sternboard which carried her out of the line to leeward and Sclater did not continue to engage her. For one thing she was now disabled and could be left to the ships astern to pick up<sup>1</sup>, while his own ship could better be employed in reinforcing the van where the enemy were in superior strength. For another, he was influenced by the article in the Instructions which provided for maintaining the cohesion of the fleet until a decisive stage of the action had been reached<sup>2</sup>. The same article affected the conduct of the next two British ships ahead, the 'Dragon' and 'Bedford.' Steering for the 'América' and 'Oriente' they opened fire upon them; but the Spanish ships crowding sail, the British ships were not able to get into close action with them for some time, nor when they did come up with them could they engage them long, as the Spaniards bore away and to pursue them would have carried the British ships to leeward<sup>3</sup>, and was contrary to doctrine.

Thus in the preliminary phase of the engagement the leading ships of the British centre had done what lay in their power against their Spanish opponents. The 'Constante' had been definitely driven out of the line, the 'Neptuno' forced to make sail ahead and to leeward, and the 'Poder' partly disabled; while the 'América' and 'Oriente' had

<sup>1</sup> It will be seen later that in both Anson's and Hawke's actions in 1747 this is what was done by the British ships. A damaged enemy was left behind to be taken up by the ships coming up from astern and her British opponent passed on ahead as quickly as possible to engage the leading ships.

<sup>2</sup> Art. 21. "None of the ships in the fleet shall pursue any small number of the enemy's ships until the main body be disabled or run."

<sup>3</sup> "Stood after another ship to leeward of her, but she bearing away from me, and perceiving by following of her I must be carried considerably to leeward of my station and in all likelihood to leeward of the enemy astern, I therefore thought it my duty to haul up again, which I accordingly did." Journal of Captain Watson, H.M.S. 'Dragon.'

avoided action and crowded to join the French van, giving their assailants only an indifferent opportunity of engaging them. No fault was found with the conduct of the captains of the 'Dragon' and 'Bedford.' It was recognised that they were not able to engage the retreating enemy more closely than they did, and though the captains of the 'Somerset' and 'Princessa' were tried for not engaging closely, both were honourably acquitted, the Court emphasising their complete satisfaction with the conduct of Captain Pett in particular, saying that "he could not have acted other than he did."

The Spanish Admiral, Don Navarro, behaved in a manner very different from his captains. When he saw the 'Namur' and 'Marlborough' bearing down upon him he prepared to receive them warmly, and directly Mathews brought to alongside him at half pistol shot he backed his own main topsail and returned the 'Namur's' broadsides. The first Spanish broadside shot off the British Flag Captain's arm and thus deprived Mathews of the services of a captain throughout the engagement.

A furious cannonade at this close range followed, in which the numerous armament and thick sides of the 'Real' gave her a great advantage. Although she was engaged by both the British ships, neither was able to bring her whole broadside to bear. The 'Marlborough' lay about half a cable's length astern of the 'Namur' and fired into the Spaniard's quarter, the British flagship being rather before her beam. Here there may have been some misunderstanding, for Cornwallis is said to have believed that he in the 'Marlborough' was intended to attack the 'Real.' If he had known—so said his nephew who succeeded to the command after he fell—that the Admiral was going to take the 'Real,' he would not have presumed to interfere with the Admiral's opponent, but would have brought to abreast his second astern, the 'Hércules.'

After about an hour's engagement<sup>1</sup>, the 'Marlborough' forged ahead and was seen from the 'Namur' to be coming close on board her. The approach was gradual, due probably to external causes; the effect was that those in the 'Namur' suddenly saw the 'Marlborough' close on board them and a collision imminent. In the heavy tumbling swell, the result of two large ships coming together in this manner would have been serious, and Mathews gave the order to fill the flagship's main-topsail. The 'Namur' then drew ahead, and when clear of the 'Marl-

<sup>1</sup> The Court Martial decided that 'Namur' was in close action for about an hour. Accounts vary from two broadsides to an hour and a half. An explosion took place on the 'Namur's' poop about the same time. See de Lage's *Journal*, which is confirmed by evidence at Mathews's trial.

borough,' the Admiral brought to again, this time a little ahead and to windward of the 'Real,' but lying so that his broadside guns could no longer bear. He was however able to fire his stern guns, but these could afford little assistance to the 'Marlborough,' who now received the whole of the 'Real's' fire<sup>1</sup>. The 'Namur' herself was badly damaged aloft, her main and mizen masts and all three topmasts were wounded and tottering, her main yard cut in the slings, her starboard shrouds all shot away but two, and for some time her men were employed securing the spars sufficiently to enable her to get into action again. A little time after she hauled ahead in this manner, the 'Real's' second astern, the 'Hércules,' drew ahead of the 'Real' through her lee, giving the 'Namur' an opportunity to open fire on her, which she did at once. The 'Hércules' immediately dropped astern again and to leeward, and took no further part in the fight.

While the Admiral and his seconds and the leading ships in the centre were thus engaging the enemy at various degrees of closeness, the ships astern were acting in a very different manner. The 'Dorsetshire,' Captain Burrish, bore down, making the 'Hércules' his mark, and came into action soon after the 'Namur' and 'Marlborough,' but at a greater distance<sup>2</sup>. She engaged the 'Hércules' for about an hour, but Burrish did not force a close engagement, nor, when the 'Hércules' dropped to leeward and drew ahead towards the lee quarter of the 'Real,' did he follow her and force the fighting<sup>3</sup>. He was conforming to the canons, which imposed the necessity of keeping in a line with the Admiral and forbade following a small body of ships<sup>4</sup>; the result was an indecisive engagement between the two ships, terminated by the 'Hércules' running out of action and leaving the 'Dorsetshire' without an opponent for the time. Burrish could now have assisted the 'Marlborough,' but he did not do so.

The ships astern of the 'Dorsetshire' were the 'Essex,' 'Rupert' and 'Royal Oak.' When Mathews bore down there was a considerable gap astern of the 'Hércules'—something between three and five miles. So far therefore as these three ships were concerned, there was an element

<sup>1</sup> Lieut. Cornwall, in evidence before the House of Commons, said he "never heard any thinking persons blame the Admiral for leaving the 'Marlborough' too soon; on the contrary, everyone commended his gallant behaviour." *Parly. History*, vol. XIII. p. 1255.

<sup>2</sup> Burrish appears to have borne down and brought to in a line with the Admiral; but owing to the fleets not being parallel, he was at a greater distance from his opponent than the 'Namur' and 'Marlborough.' The 'Hércules' appears also to have edged to leeward.

<sup>3</sup> Burrish was found guilty of not doing his utmost, by his not bearing down into a line with the Admiral when he first brought to, to engage, and by his lying to for half-an-hour and not helping 'Marlborough.' Adjudged to be cashiered.

<sup>4</sup> Art. 21, previously quoted.



of uncertainty as to what the British ships should do. The duty of each ship was to bear down and engage her opposite, taking station from the flagship. The ships ahead had each their opponent, but for these rearmost ships of the division there were no opponents nearer than the five Spanish ships astern, and, in the light wind then blowing, there appeared little possibility of their coming up for some time. While their subsequent inaction may be condemned, the question of what they should do immediately must be considered, and the difficulties, such as they were, appreciated.

All three ships bore down with the Admiral but did not go so far as he did. They had then various steps they might take. They might stretch ahead and assist the Admiral and his seconds to crush the 'Real' and her second astern; or put their helms up and go away large with the wind on the starboard quarter and bring the five Spaniards in rear to action as quickly as possible; or jog down on a lasking course under easy sail, dropping astern of their leaders and falling in with the five Spaniards as they came up. If the first of these alternatives had been chosen, the Spaniards in rear might have been left to Lestock to deal with, and undoubtedly the assistance that would have been given to the centre would have been invaluable. But it must not be forgotten that no precedent existed for such a step, and though we may say that men should rise superior to convention and grasp the essentials of a situation, it must not be forgotten that it is not easy at any time to throw aside the accepted doctrines governing action, especially in a matter where the instructions were so definite as they were at that time. It is impossible to exact rigid obedience to instructions and at the same time to expect the average officer to develop and employ initiative. Exceptional men may do so, but it is the average man who has to be considered<sup>1</sup>.

To bear away large would also have been an extreme step to take, though some officers considered the three ships could have steered northerly to meet the approaching Spanish rear; it was open to the objection that in doing so three ships would be taken down to engage five. Although Lestock's division was coming up it might be some time before it could afford help, and in that time the enemy's superiority might assert itself with evil results. Both these former alternatives imply however that all three ships should act as one: either all three captains must act upon a common thought or one captain must take command and carry the detachment either ahead or astern. No such

<sup>1</sup> It will be seen that even Hawke did not pursue an antagonist when doing so would have taken the 'Berwick' out of her station astern of the 'Princess Caroline.' See *post*, p. 34.

powers were vested in any captain; none could act independently of his divisional commander.

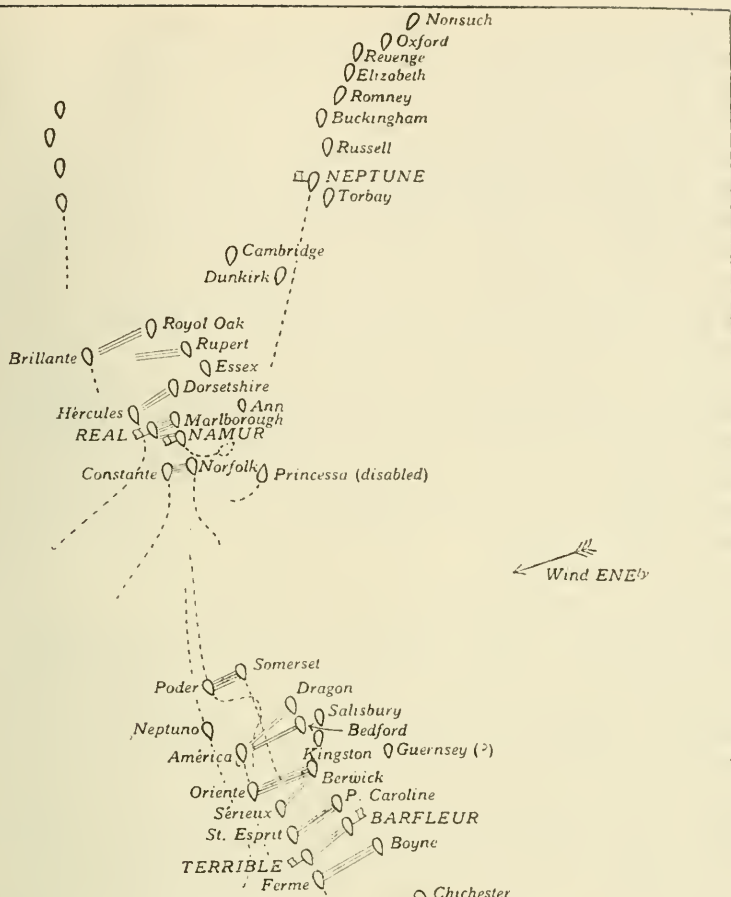
The other alternative of bringing to at once and allowing the enemy to come up and engage them, while promising neither so effectual nor so speedy a result as either of the others, was the one most in conformity with naval thought of the day, and was what the majority of officers considered the three ships should have done. To a certain extent it is what they did do, but they brought to to windward of their own line, and a very long way to windward and ahead of the rear five ships of the enemy. The 'Essex' behaved worst. From the beginning she remained on the weather quarter of the 'Dorsetshire' and in that position she brought to. Captain Richard Norris, her commander, made no effort to support the 'Marlborough' although her plight could clearly be seen. "The 'Essex's' people were quite mad to go down to her assistance and cried out that it was a shame to see a ship in such distress and not go down to her assistance<sup>1</sup>." Lieut. Bentley suggested to Norris that he should bear down. Norris replied that if the Admiral wanted him to do so he should make a signal. He brought his main topsail to the mast and remained with his helm a-lee for hours. His conduct needs no discussion for he tacitly admitted that no defence could serve him. The son of the Admiral of the Fleet was for a time protected by interest at a travesty of a trial under the presidency of Rowley; but when he was ordered home to be court-martialled he deserted and was never seen again.

The 'Rupert,' Captain Ambrose, brought to to windward of the 'Dorsetshire,' having the 'Essex' on her weather bow. In defence of his inaction Ambrose argued that he could not press on and assist the 'Marlborough' or attack the 'Hércules,' as by so doing he would have been taking the place of the 'Dorsetshire' and 'Essex,' to whom the duty of succouring the 'Marlborough' should properly have fallen; and, as to the enemy astern, he contended they were so far out of action that even if he had carried his ship further to leeward, they would still not have come up to engage him for a long time—arguments which afford no justification for not doing what others were leaving undone, or for not trying to get quicker into action. The fourth ship, the 'Royal Oak,' Captain Williams, bore further down than the 'Rupert' and then brought to, a long half mile astern and to leeward of her, and therefore nearer the approaching enemy. He at least did his best to place his ship in a situation ready to engage the enemy when they drew up.

The Spanish rear was straggling, with the leading ship, the 'Brillante'

<sup>1</sup> Evidence of H. Costabadie, midshipman; Mr Raynor, midshipman; G. Ward, "trimonier."

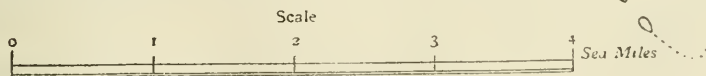




# THE BATTLE OF TOULON

Diagram 5  
2 p.m. Feb. 11th

Namur fills and stretches ahead to avoid Marlborough. Somerset having forced Neptuno ahead, engages Poder when she comes up until Poder is disabled aloft when Somerset leaves her and passes on towards van. French van makes sail and stretches ahead. Oriente driven out of line by Berwick, America edges to leeward out of range; Berwick seeing Poder on her quarter disengaged puts helm up and engages her. Leading ships of British line keep about a mile to windward of van of enemy. Rear not yet in action.



a good mile ahead of the 'Alcon' and drawing up fairly fast. About 2 she came abreast of the 'Royal Oak,' and shots were exchanged, though at a long distance and the 'Brillante' promptly bore up, and running a little to leeward of the line, kept all her sail abroad to join her division. As she passed the 'Rupert,' at a still longer range than she had passed the 'Royal Oak,' Ambrose fired some shots at her which were wholly ineffective. Williams, observing that the other four ships continued to draw up under all sail, and that neither the 'Rupert' nor the 'Essex' shewed any sign of coming down to leeward to help him, hauled his wind and ran up under the 'Rupert's' lee quarter and hailed Ambrose, "Why don't you edge down nearer, Captain Ambrose?" he called out. Ambrose, who was in the quarter gallery, made no reply. His guns fired some more short shot, and Williams, stamping his foot and crying "God damn it, you may as well throw your powder and shot into the sea," put up his helm again and bore away alone. If he then remained at too long a range some excuse is to be found for a single ship which is opposed to four of the enemy without any immediate prospect of assistance<sup>1</sup>.

The captains of the leading ships of the rear division, the 'Dunkirk' and 'Cambridge,' were also uncertain as to how they should act. They were some distance ahead of their division when Mathews bore down on the enemy, but were in line, or very nearly so, with their Vice-Admiral. Captain Wager Purvis of the 'Dunkirk,' when he saw the Admiral going down, turned to Mr Hughes, his first Lieutenant, and said "What are we to do now?" Hughes replied "Bear down, Sir, and attack the leading ships of the enemy's rear." But Purvis replied that he dared not break the line, and held on his course followed by the 'Cambridge.' The Vice-Admiral did nothing to send these ships into action.

The movements of the van during the approach and opening phases of the battle are of the utmost importance. By noon, when Mathews steered for the 'Real,' the British van was not yet formed in line. Although the leading ships were nearly abreast the French van in bearing all the ships ahead of the 'Barfleur' were still stretched away on her weather bow<sup>2</sup>, the 'Stirling Castle,' the wing ship, being about two miles from the Rear-Admiral. The French line reached a long three miles

<sup>1</sup> Captain Williams was found guilty of not doing his utmost, but it was considered that there were mitigating circumstances; he was judged unfit to be employed on H.M. service and to be put and continued on half pay.

Captain Ambrose was found guilty of not doing his utmost in not bearing down; as he had suffered confinement and his failure was considered due to mistaken judgment, he was only cashiered and mulct one year's pay.

<sup>2</sup> "The ships ahead formed a diagonal line from the rear Admiral with respect to the ships astern of him." *Evidence of Captain H. Osborn.*

ahead of the 'Terrible,' de Court's flagship, and was in good order<sup>1</sup>, going under topsails and stretching away from the Spanish ships in the rear of the line.

The British van consisted of nine ships of the line and three 50 gun ships. Rowley called the latter, which were to windward, into the line when he bore down, so that he had twelve ships in his division with which to engage the sixteen ships of the French squadron<sup>2</sup>. In any case, therefore, he must leave four ships of the enemy without opponents.

When the Commander-in-Chief began the attack the frigates were still to windward of the line and the van division was not in a sufficiently advanced position to allow the leading ships to steer for the head of the enemy's line. The Rear-Admiral had no intimation of what the Admiral's intentions were and had thus to make up his mind quickly as to how he would attack. He could bear up at once and engage the nearest ships of the enemy that he could reach, or he could hold on his course until he had drawn far enough ahead to fetch the leading ships. Rowley does not appear to have hesitated to decide that the attack having begun his duty dictated that he should join in it at once, and he put his helm up and bore down towards the French line. Whether he endeavoured to stretch as far ahead as possible, or whether, like Parker at the Dogger Bank, he followed the ancient formula that flagship should engage flagship, does not appear in any of the Journals or evidences. The 'Barfleur' eventually rounded to abreast the 'Terrible.' This position had an unfortunate effect upon the subsequent course of the action. It brought the five ships astern of 'Barfleur' abreast of only two French ships<sup>3</sup>, their only alternative objectives, except the opponents of the flagship and her second astern, being those Spaniards for whom the leading ships of the British centre were steering; and, while this so crowded them that they could not develop their whole fire, the British ahead of 'Barfleur' were opposed to the remaining thirteen ships of the French squadron.

The 'Barfleur' and 'Princess Caroline' came to a warm engagement

<sup>1</sup> Some accounts say there was a gap ahead of the 4th or 5th ship, but it seems this occurred later, after the 'Terrible' brought to to meet Rowley's attack.

<sup>2</sup> It must, however, be pointed out that 50 gun ships did not get into the line for a considerable time. The 'Chatham's' log and journal are unfortunately missing so that her movements cannot be certainly traced. She was ordered to take station astern of 'Nassau.' 'Salisbury's' journal gives us her own place as between 'Kingston' and 'Bedford,' but she does not seem to have got into it until late. 'Guernsey's' log gives no information; in other places she is said to have been in the rear portion of the line. She did not come into action.

<sup>3</sup> I.e. 'Princess Caroline,' 'Berwick,' 'Guernsey,' 'Kingston' and 'Salisbury' against 'St Esprit' and 'Sérieux.'

with the French Admiral and his seconds<sup>1</sup>. Hawke in the 'Berwick,' according to his station astern of the 'Princess Caroline,' should have had the 'Sérieux' as his opponent, but apparently he was not able to fetch her, and he came into action with the leading Spanish ship, receiving the fire of the 'Sérieux' upon his lee bow. He had no better fortune with his Spanish opponent than the captains astern had had with theirs. She passed him as they had passed them and ran to leeward out of range. When the 'Neptuno' came up she served him in a similar manner. "I ordered the foresail to be set," he wrote in his journal, "with an intent to go alongside the Neptune...and bore down upon her to come to closer action, which she observing made more sail and bore away under the lee of the French, upon which finding I could not come nearer to her without going ahead of the Carolina, obliged me to give over that design." Thus Hawke, like the others, respected the line and was bound by the established rules<sup>2</sup>.

How the ships ahead of the flagship should act was now the question for their captains to decide. The 'Barfleur's' second ahead, the 'Boyne,' had a straightforward matter to solve; her obvious opponent was the 'Terrible's' second ahead, the 'Ferme' 74. The 'Chichester,' 80, taking her cue from the 'Boyne,' and, it may be said, in accordance with Mathews's manuscript addition to the Fighting Instructions which directed ships to take station from the Admiral, pointed for the 'Diamant,' 56, an unequal distribution of force resulting from Rowley not having had time to adjust his line, in accordance with custom, so that ships should engage the enemy of the same force. The Rear-Admiral's 50-gun ships had not yet been able to get into the line. The remaining ships had, however, a less easy solution. So far as instructions could guide them they had two, and these in the circumstances of the particular case were contradictory, as instructions which attempt to provide for all situations are bound so frequently to be. Article 19 of the Printed Fighting Instructions directed the van of the fleet to steer with the van of the enemy's and there engage them; by this Article the headmost ships should steer for the headmost ships of the enemy; but by so doing they would have contravened the manuscript addition made by Mathews to Article 1, which ran: "Every ship is to observe and keep the same distance those ships do which are next

<sup>1</sup> "À deux heures après midi 2 vaisseaux de trois ponts se sont battus avec quatre des nôtres, qui sont, le Sérieux, le St Esprit, le Terrible et le Ferme" (*Journal de la Volage, Archives de la Marine*, Paris).

<sup>2</sup> Hawke, in his evidence at the Court Martial, gives the 'Neptuno' as his first antagonist, but it appears that he engaged her later. In his journal he says "Admiral Rowley...began to engage as did the Princess Caroline with another French ship and we with the headmost of the Spanish ships." This was the 'América.'



the Admiral." That is to say, if the Admiral's seconds kept a half cable from the flagship, each ship in succession was to keep a half cable from her next astern or next ahead as the case might be: and this expressly forbade their stretching away and opening the distance so as to enable them to engage the headmost ships. The 'Chichester,' as we have seen, interpreted the movement in accordance with Mathews's addition; but the remaining three ships, the 'Nassau,' 'Warwick' and 'Stirling Castle,' seeing that the headmost ships of the enemy if left free could double on the British line astern—always a very favourite design of the French—after standing down to within about a mile of the enemy, hauled their wind and stretched with the ships at the head of the French line<sup>1</sup> with the object of containing them. When Captain Cooper of the 'Stirling Castle,' who had expected Rowley to come further ahead, saw him bear away for de Court's flagship, he turned to his first Lieutenant, Matthew King, and said he was puzzled what to do and how he should act to avoid censure. He could not bear down alone and have the whole of the French van upon him. He saw no way of assisting by fighting, but he considered that by keeping the wind he could prevent the enemy from tacking and doubling on the Rear-Admiral<sup>2</sup>.

Temple West in the 'Warwick,' the second ship in the line, was of the same opinion. He saw that this was one of those unforeseen circumstances for which detailed instructions cannot provide, and boldly took the line that, as the instructions applied to a situation different from that in which he found himself, it was his duty to ignore them. "Had the headmost ships of the English van," he reasoned during his subsequent Court Martial<sup>3</sup>, "gone down to the headmost of the French, would not as many of their line as they had thought proper to bring upon us have had it in their power to have engaged us, and the remaining part of doubling upon our Rear-Admiral? Or had our foremost ships gone down upon the sternmost of the French that were not engaged, would not their whole line ahead have had it in their power to have brought the van betwixt two fires?...And was this to be done in strict obedience to the signal abroad, and, out of a pretence of endamaging his Majesty's enemies, give up his Majesty's ships to them? No. These officers (i.e. the commanders of the three van ships) knew no signals directing such conduct, and as they knew what was their duty to their King and Country, so they had a spirit to act up to it in

<sup>1</sup> If they had continued to stand down the 'Stirling Castle' would have fetched about the 7th or 8th ship in the French line.

<sup>2</sup> Cooper was found to fall under the 11th article of war, by 11 votes to 3, and sentenced to be cashiered, but not rendered incapable of further service.

<sup>3</sup> *Court Martial on Temple West*. His written defence.



all opposition to all the senseless observances insisted on by Mr Lestock<sup>1</sup>. I call 'em so, as the 11th and 12th Articles of War from which this discipline is taken directs no such conduct as is here required. It is true that the former of them enjoins obedience to be paid to the commands of the Admiral, as well for the assailing of the enemy as for whatever else he may direct, *but the nature of that obedience can only be judged by the order or signal that commands it, and which describes under what circumstances you are to perform the required services*<sup>2</sup>." This defence of West's fully shews the motives which governed his conduct. The object of the Captains of the 'Stirling Castle,' 'Warwick,' and 'Nassau'<sup>3</sup> was quite clear to all of them, namely, that as the division had gone down on the rear ships of the French van, it was in imminent danger of being doubled on, and that this movement might be delayed, if not actually prevented, by keeping to windward of them.

A fairly wide gap soon formed between the French and Spaniards. When the engagement began between the 'Barfleur' and 'Terrible' both ships had brought to, but their action was not copied by the ships ahead. The French ships engaged by the 'Boyne' and 'Chichester'<sup>4</sup> remained under sail, and, although receiving no heavy fire, put up their helms and edged away to leeward and so began to make a curve in the line ahead of the 'Terrible.' De Court did not lie to for long; as the ships ahead of him kept under sail and drew ahead, he soon filled his topsails and followed them. The ships astern of him followed suit, and the whole French line, sailing faster than the British, gained on them. One of the Spanish ships—the 'Neptuno' or 'Ori-

<sup>1</sup> I.e. That nothing could excuse captains from breaking the line.

<sup>2</sup> Captain Temple West's remarks on military obedience, contained in his defence, deserve notice:

"I apprehend if any officer dispenses with an order calculated for a situation he cannot at that time act in, the force and meaning of the order is not thereby violated, as the purpose for which it was intended cannot be said to be neglected when it could not be done; and therefore if he does no injury to the service by it, the utmost that can be said to the disadvantage of such an action is that it is in its nature indifferent and therefore neither rewardable nor punishable but as the appearance of the intention may make it" (*Court Martial on Captain West*).

The Court unanimously found that West was guilty of disobedience to part of 1st, 13th, 17th and 24th articles of the Fighting Instructions; that he not a principal cause of the miscarriage, but that he was part cause as he did not comply with the Fighting Instructions; that he fell under the 11th Article of War. He was cashiered.

West, Lloyd and Cooper were all subsequently restored to their rank.

<sup>3</sup> Captain Lloyd of the 'Nassau' did not attempt to make any defence of his action. He considered he had acted properly and that his conduct needed no defence. He was cashiered.

<sup>4</sup> The 'Chichester' did not bear down as far as the Rear-Admiral. Captain Dilke was tried by Court Martial and found guilty of not doing his utmost to get into and keep in a line with the Rear-Admiral. He was cashiered.

ente'—came ahead from her engagement with the 'Bedford' and received the 'Berwick's' fire, and bore away to leeward.

It was at this stage of the action, a little after 2 o'clock, that the 'Poder,' which was engaged with the 'Somerset' and had also received the fire, first of the 'Princessa' and subsequently of the 'Dragon,' 'Bedford' and 'Kingston' as she drew away from them, lost her foretopmast. The 'Somerset' was at this time abreast her and sailing at about the same rate. The loss of her head sails threw the 'Poder' up into the wind, and she passed under the stern of the 'Somerset,' who got her main tack on board to go about. Before the 'Somerset' was round, however, Hawke in the 'Berwick' saw her, and having now no antagonist, since the remaining French and Spanish ships had gone ahead, he at once put his helm hard up, ran down to the 'Poder,' and engaged her hotly at pistol shot for nearly two hours. Soon after 4 the 'Poder' surrendered. Her main and mizen masts were shot away, twelve guns were dismounted, and over 200 men were killed and wounded<sup>1</sup>.

In the rear, meanwhile, Lestock's division was gradually coming up. Although the Vice-Admiral saw the action between the 'Marlborough' and the 'Real' going seriously for the British ship, and that the five Spanish ships in the rear were drawing up to join their Admiral, he neither made all possible sail nor detached any of his ships to assist the 'Marlborough' or cut off the approaching Spaniards. For not assisting the 'Marlborough' he may be excused, seeing that there were three disengaged ships which had it in their power to do so; but that he should throw away his opportunity of cutting off the rearmost Spaniards is inexcusable. His reasons carry no conviction. He argued that he was bound to keep his division together and bring it up in good order, and that, consistent with that requirement, he steered a proper course to cut off the Spanish rear. His own correspondence with Barnett condemns him on the first point and the evidence of reputable witnesses at the subsequent Court Martial showed that he neither carried all the sail he could nor steered the quickest course. His conduct has been ascribed to his personal dislike of Mathews, and it is not to be wondered that his behaviour, otherwise incomprehensible, should have been so interpreted in the fleet.

<sup>1</sup> The 'Berwick' lost five men wounded in this business. "We began to engage her close about 2 o'clock or a little after, and continued to engage till  $\frac{1}{4}$  after 4 when she struck. When she first fired upon us, she was upon our quarter. I don't know whether we engaged closer than the 'Princessa' and 'Somerset' had done. The 'Princessa' appeared to me to engage her very near, but whether as near as us, I can't say. We engaged her very close at last" (*Evidence of Captain Hawke in the trial of Captain Pett*).

We left the 'Namur' lying ahead and somewhat to windward of the 'Marlborough,' repairing her damages aloft preparatory to returning to action. The 'Marlborough' meanwhile had suffered heavily. Cornwall, her captain, a man of great promise, lost both his legs early in the action and his nephew, Frederick Cornwall, was severely wounded; over 40 men were killed and 125 wounded<sup>1</sup>. At 3 P.M. her masts went by the board, and Mathews, seeing the distress she was in, sent his 2nd Lieutenant, Bentley, to the 'Dorsetshire' to order Burrish to close and assist the 'Marlborough,' and stop the rearmost Spanish ships from coming up, and when he should have delivered that message, to go on to the fireship and order her to bear down at once and burn the 'Real.' The signal for her to do so had already been abroad but had not been obeyed as the 'Ann' for some reason was not ready, though Mackie had been given his orders to prime at about 10 A.M.; another half hour passed without the 'Dorsetshire' making any movement. Then Bentley went on board a second time and repeated his message, and, having noticed that Burrish had still taken no steps to stop the Spanish ships<sup>2</sup>, he went on board the 'Essex' and told Captain Richard Norris that he thought that if the 'Essex' were taken down to stop the Spanish ships it would please the Admiral. Norris enquired if it were the Admiral's "order" he should do so; and finding it was not, but an independent opinion of Bentley's, he did nothing. Thus when at about 4 the 'Ann' began to come down before the wind, she was unsupported by either the 'Dorsetshire' or 'Essex.'

The 'Real' had now put before the wind and was lying to leeward of the 'Marlborough,' no longer engaging, and the headmost ships of the Spanish rear were just within gun shot. Seeing the situation, Mathews put his helm hard up and ran down towards the 'Real' to cover the fireship's advance; but he was too late to be of any help. The Spanish ships astern opened fire on the 'Ann' but she crept forward through their falling shot uninjured. Seeing the imminent danger of his situation the captain of the 'Real' sent out a launch to tow the fireship away before she could get alongside, but a well directed musketry fire from the 'Ann's' fore-castle prevented the Spanish crew from getting a hawser on board. Then the 'Ann' was hit. A shot from the 'Real' pierced her below the water-line forward and she began to settle by the head, still moving towards her goal from which she was separated by a few yards only; hope that she might reach it still remained. But in this position, so near the attainment of her object, her end came. Her priming was fired—whether by a shot from the enemy, from accident,

<sup>1</sup> The 'Real' suffered more severely still. She had 238 killed and 262 wounded.

<sup>2</sup> Burrish made excuses that he had not powder filled.

# THE BATTLE OF TOULON

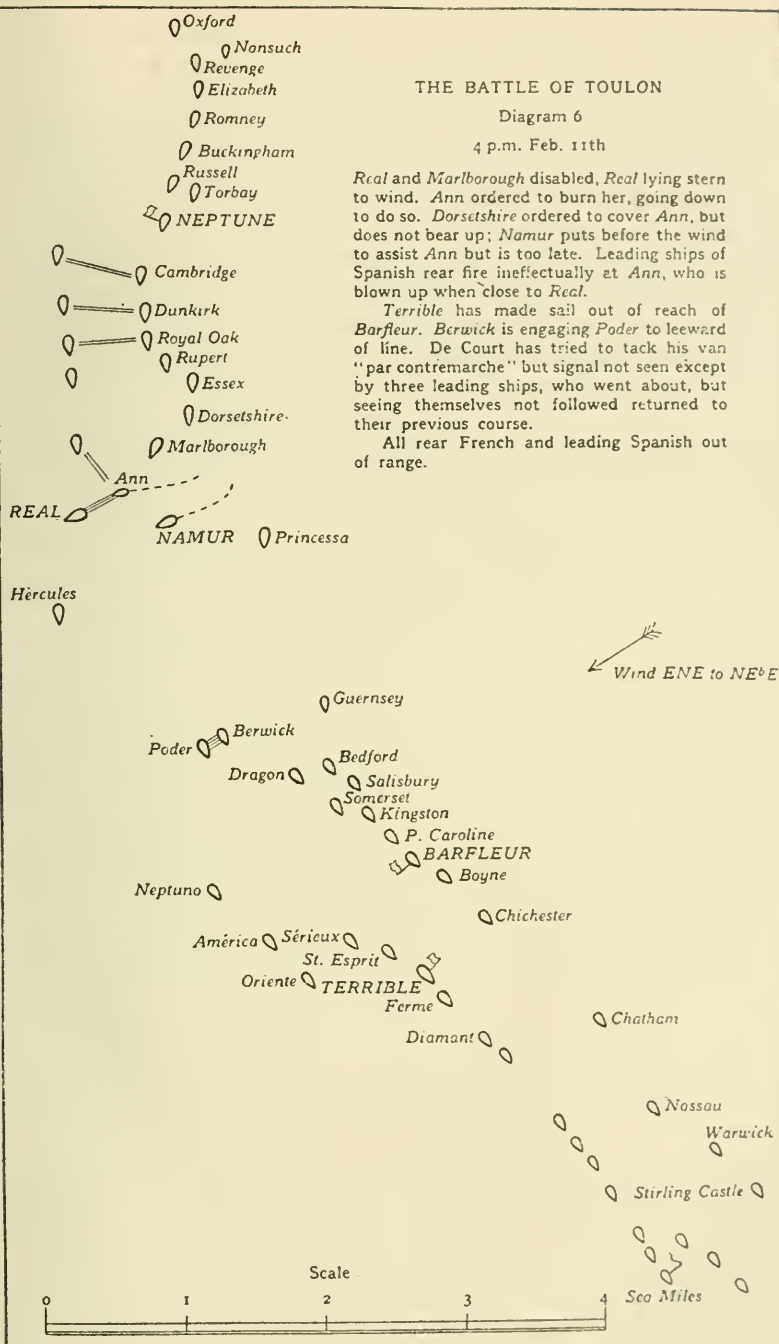
Diagram 6

4 p.m. Feb. 11th

*Real* and *Marlborough* disabled, *Real* lying stern to wind. *Ann* ordered to burn her, going down to do so. *Dorsetshire* ordered to cover *Ann*, but does not bear up; *Namur* puts before the wind to assist *Ann* but is too late. Leading ships of Spanish rear fire ineffectually at *Ann*, who is blown up when close to *Real*.

*Terrible* has made sail out of reach of *Barfleur*. *Berwick* is engaging *Poder* to leeward of line. De Court has tried to tack his van "par contremarche" but signal not seen except by three leading ships, who went about, but seeing themselves not followed returned to their previous course.

All rear French and leading Spanish out of range.



or purposely by Captain Mackie, was never established—and she blew up carrying all on board her to destruction. So the attempt failed.

The Spanish ships from astern had now joined the 'Real,' and Lestock's division was just drawing up with the rear. His leading ships, the 'Dunkirk' and 'Cambridge,' had already been engaged, though at long range, with the Spaniards; his flagship, the 'Neptune,' opened an ineffective fire at random shot at about 4 o'clock. Lestock's forbearance from engaging was noted by Captain Long, who stated with the greatest definiteness that the Spanish rear could have been engaged at this time; and a conversation overheard by both the surgeon, Mr Savage, and the purser, Mr Hargood, at an earlier hour in the afternoon makes it seem that he could have done so even sooner. Lestock at that time was sitting in an arm-chair on the starboard side of the quarter-deck, observing the rearmost Spaniards. Calling Lieutenant Cockburn, "Cockburn," says he "we must bear down to those five ships." The Lieutenant replied "You may, if you please, Sir, but if you do you will then have them all upon us." Lestock did not bear down, nor did he do so at 4 o'clock; instead, he hauled his wind and kept out of action.



## CHAPTER II

### CONCLUDING PHASES OF THE BATTLE OF TOULON

THE action now, at about four in the afternoon, took a new turn. Earlier in the engagement the French Admiral had desired to tack<sup>1</sup> in order to weather the British line, but for some reason had been unable to get his signal through. His three leading ships did, however, go about and made a short board to the northward, a movement which was copied by the three headmost ships of the British van. The three French ships stood no longer than a few minutes on the starboard tack, when, seeing that the remainder of their line was not coming with them, they again stayed and stood to the southward, now being rather to windward of their line. The 'Stirling Castle' and her two next astern did the same.

Shortly after 4.30, when the 'Poder' had surrendered and the arrival of the British rear was making the situation of the 'Real' precarious, de Court again signalled his division to tack together, this time with success<sup>2</sup>. The whole French line went about and hauled their wind on the starboard tack and stood to the northward as though to cut the British line at about the 'Princess Caroline.' Rowley at once went about and stood to the northward. His three van ships, although they went round as soon as they saw the French line in stays, were rapidly overhauled by the faster sailing French, and it appeared for some time as if they would be caught by superior force; but just as the French wing ships came up close under the stern of the 'Stirling Castle,' de Court bore away for the 'Real.' Most singular of all, the French did not fire a shot, though they passed under the sterns of the leading British ships so close that they almost touched!

The 'Berwick' was at this moment alongside the 'Poder.' She had put a prize crew on board under Lieutenant Edward Vernon, who were busy getting jurmasts rigged to carry her away. The sudden turn of

<sup>1</sup> "M. de Court ayant fait le signal pour faire revirer notre avant-garde par la contremarche, lequel signal n'a pas été aperçu quoique le Zéphire, qui était répétiteur, ait tiré trois coups de canon pour les en faire apercevoir" (*Journal de la Volage, M. de Beaufremont, Archives de la Marine*).

<sup>2</sup> De Court to the Bishop of Rennes: "As soon as the English left me, I drew together all the ships of both squadrons and sailed immediately to the assistance of the 'Royal Phillippe.'" He tacked together, his previous signal not being seen, "on fut obligé de faire revirer tous les Français en même temps." *De Court's Narrative, Archives de la Marine*.

the French gave Hawke no time to recover his men, and he was obliged to leave his prize and hasten to rejoin the line to avoid being cut off by the advancing French who retook the 'Poder.'

The respective vans and rears were now standing towards each other. Not more than a short hour's daylight remained, and Mathews, judging a confused night action would be all to his disadvantage<sup>1</sup>, ignorant as yet what damage the van had received, wore with his division and steered to the northward in order to collect his ships together and place his fleet between the enemy and Toulon so that they could not return to their harbour. The ships of the British centre and of Rowley's division passed the Spanish rear on opposite courses and exchanged hot broadsides at a fairly effective range, but as they separated no further fighting took place.

Nightfall thus saw the British squadron repairing damages and reforming to the northward, the enemy doing the same thing between five and eight miles to the southward of them. The 'Namur' was so much wounded aloft that Mathews shifted his flag on board the 'Russell' in order to be able to renew the engagement next day.

At daylight next morning the enemy were still in sight, but further to leeward, the French rather nearer the British line than the Spaniards. The 'Hércules' was astern of the remainder and was lying between the two fleets, and the 'Somerset,' which had become separated from the main body through having "built one or two Chapells<sup>2</sup>" during the night, lay near her. Captain Sclater made sail and attacked the Spanish ship, but the latter succeeded in rejoining her main body after a short running fight.

Mathews made sail with the whole fleet and followed the enemy, who were steering away to the westward before an easterly breeze. As he pursued them his ships straggled, and while his leading ships had gained considerably by 2 in the afternoon, those with damaged spars had dropped a very long way astern. The French, finding that the leading British division was coming up, dropped the recaptured 'Poder' which was delaying their retreat, and made more sail to join the Spaniards. Mathews then decided that he could not risk continuing a chase in such extended order as his fleet then was, and he shortened sail to bring up his rear, or enough of them to deal with the compact

<sup>1</sup> Mathews was criticised by some officers for not going down to the 'Poder' to prevent her recapture. To have done so would have involved the fleets in a night action and this Mathews frankly said he considered highly undesirable unless the object were a greater one than the capture of one ship. Captain Forbes said "I believe no man would have forced a line of eighteen sail in the night time to have picked up one poor 60 gun ship, which was no object to the views of H M. fleet."

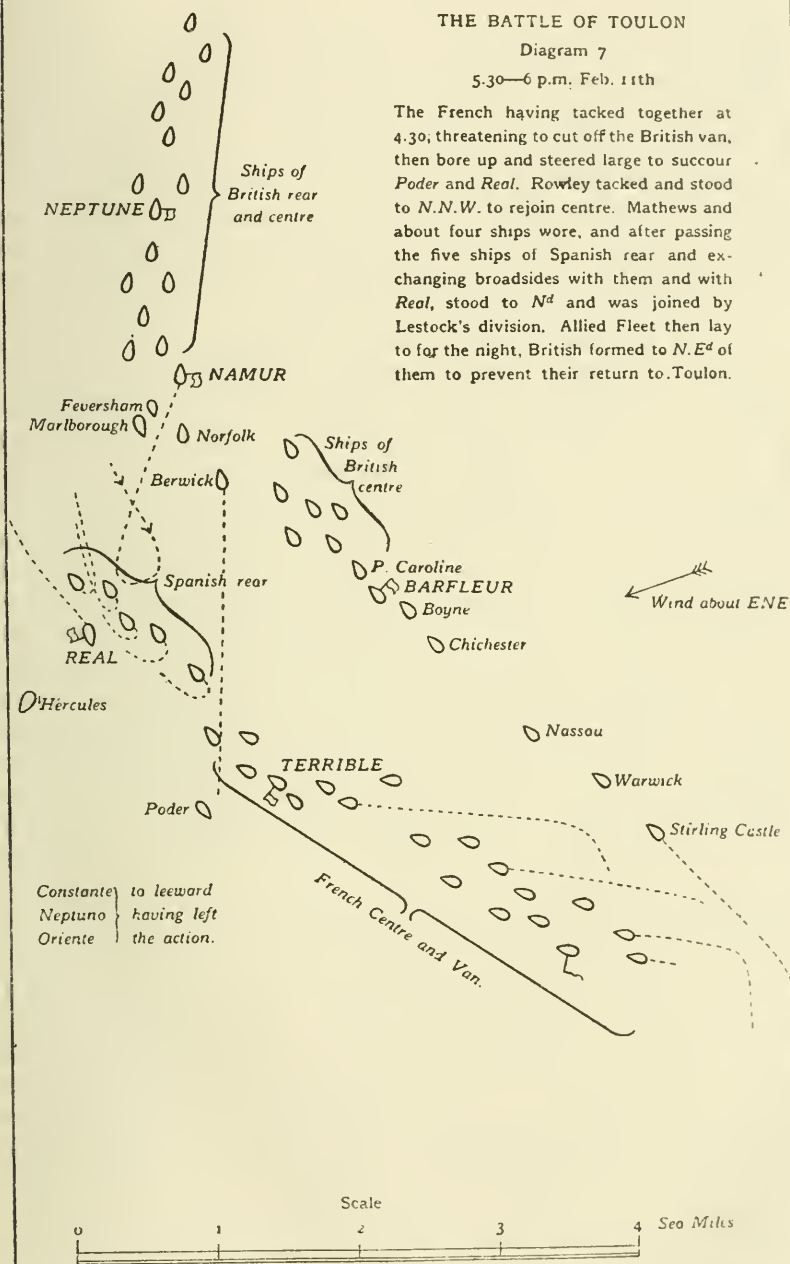
<sup>2</sup> I.e. gone about involuntarily while lying to.

# THE BATTLE OF TOULON

Diagram 7

5.30—6 p.m. Feb. 11th

The French having tacked together at 4.30, threatening to cut off the British van, then bore up and steered large to succour *Poder* and *Real*. Rowley tacked and stood to N.N.W. to rejoin centre. Mathews and about four ships wore, and after passing the five ships of Spanish rear and exchanging broadsides with them and with *Real*, stood to N<sup>d</sup> and was joined by Lestock's division. Allied Fleet then lay to for the night, British formed to N.E<sup>d</sup> of them to prevent their return to Toulon.



force with which the enemy were able to oppose him. At 4 the British fleet came up with the deserted 'Poder,' near which one French 70-gun ship was still lying. The 'Berwick' and 'Diamond' were ordered by Rowley to rescue her, and at the same time Mathews detached the 'Essex' to burn her as she was too disabled to join the fleet and he could not spare frigates to tow her to Mahon. The 'Poder' was therefore destroyed, greatly to the dissatisfaction of her original captors. The reason why Mathews felt he could not spare frigates to tow her was that he believed that the enemy was now making an effort to join the Brest squadron, and he expected the two forces to effect a junction at any moment. It was therefore necessary to retain all his frigates with him, and to keep all his fleet concentrated.

At 5 p.m. the British rear was such a long way astern that Mathews brought to. Although he had pursued with all the sail he could carry consistent with keeping his force together he found that by that time he had gained but little. He was now absolutely convinced, both from the manner of their behaviour on the preceding day, and from their steady retreat of the 12th, that the enemy would not fight until they had effected their junction with the Brest squadron, or drawn him away far enough from the coast to enable some design to be executed in connexion with the transport of troops, concerning which the last intelligence he had from Paris, Toulon and Marseilles clearly indicated some such intention. "It was confidently said," he stated, "that the Brest squadron was coming to the Mediterranean and I knew for certain the day they put to sea. Had they come to the Mediterranean and His Majesty's fleet been separated, it is very obvious what would have been the consequence of the separation...And I must here in particular take notice," he concluded, "that the preservation of Italy was esteemed of such great consequence to the common cause, that it was the next thing given to me in command from His Majesty to the destruction of the enemy's fleet." In his opinion, the utmost he could effect was the capture of the 'Real,' which a continuation of the pursuit might have obliged the enemy to drop. Should he, for the sake of that triumph such as it was, so far short of the destruction of the enemy's fleet, leave open the whole coast which had been committed in so particular a manner to his charge, and thus risk prejudicing the campaign in Italy?

So far as he made the transports of the enemy his objective he was not departing from an established doctrine, a doctrine which in later times may be said to have become traditional. But he had not only those transports to consider; there were also the nineteen Piedmontese battalions at Villefranche whose secure retreat he had promised to arrange for at the earnest request of the King of Sardinia. If Mathews



had possessed the frigates and small craft for which he had pressed ineffectually for the last 18 months<sup>1</sup>, the defence of the coast need have weighed little with him and he could have left it in their hands: but his light frigates and sloops were few, and he needed all his heavy frigates with the fleet in case he should meet the Brest squadron. The only vessels which were in a position to deal with an attempt at invasion were the two sloops he had left on the coast of the Riviera and Provence.

Mathews had still another reason which might incline him to return to the coast of Italy. If he should follow the Franco-Spaniards down the coast, they would be continually drawing him towards their reinforcement, from Brest, and he might find himself, with his wounded fleet, opposed to a superior force composed of perfect ships. Undoubtedly he might expect that if the Brest squadron got away, a British force of similar strength would follow it and reinforce him; the Duke of Newcastle had indeed told him that step would be taken. But a long time might pass before the home authorities were sure of whither the enemy was gone. With such a start as they would thus have<sup>2</sup> they might join the Toulon fleet long before Mathews's reinforcement would reach him, and in such case the worst thing he could do would be to meet them on the open sea. He might go into Gibraltar and await them there, as indeed he had at one time contemplated; but while he did so Italy would be exposed. If, however, he returned to the coast, he not only maintained the blockade so essential for the European war, but he gave more time for the reinforcements from England to reach him. The extra time added in working up to the Gulf of Lyons from the Straits would all be in favour of the British squadron which would be hurrying out to join him. With these views in his mind Mathews decided to secure his spars aloft and return to Italy<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> His latest letter before the battle was dated January 26th: "I must entreat your Grace to...order out a supply of seamen and a few clean small frigates. The want of which is greatly prejudicial to the service, especially in the Adriatic...They should be ordered to make the best of their way, as fast as they can be got ready, and not to wait for each other." Mathews to Duke of Newcastle. Sec. of State's Letters, 4112.

<sup>2</sup> The Brest squadron sailed on January 26th. No movements of the squadrons at home were considered possible before February 13th. This would have given the enemy a start of at least eighteen days.

<sup>3</sup> In the Court Martial by which Mathews was tried two years later the article of the charge against him which related to his conduct on the 12th was considered by the Court under two main headings. First, could he have brought the fleet up in order, so as to engage the enemy during the day of the 12th; secondly, should he have continued his chase during the night? The Court decided (by a majority of 14 to 5) that he could not have brought his fleet up, owing to the lagging of the disabled ships, and found no fault with him for not sending his fastest ships



Mathews lay to again throughout the night of the 12th, leaving orders to be called if the enemy, who had also brought to, made any move. At about 2.30 the officer of the middle watch on board the 'Russell' observed the enemy's lights to be growing dimmer, and called Mathews<sup>1</sup>, who at once made sail after them. That morning the wind was blowing a fresh gale from the north and N.E. At daylight on the 13th Lestock, whose division was now ahead of the main body, made the signal for seeing a fleet. Mathews signalled him to chase and the whole fleet stretched away to the south-westward, in a roughly formed line ahead, the Vice-Admiral's division leading by some miles, followed by the centre and the rear. The wind freshened rapidly, and Lestock's division drew away; but Mathews, after a couple of hours decided not to follow up the chase any longer but to revert to his original idea of regaining the coast of the Riviera. He therefore recalled Lestock and brought the fleet to, for the wind was by then too strong to beat to windward with his crazy spars.

There is no doubt that the enemy were still in sight on the morning of the 13th<sup>2</sup>. Mathews denied that they were seen from his flagship, but whether they were or not is immaterial to the argument. Indeed, he himself made no pretence that he would have continued pursuit if he had seen them, nor did he deny that it was possible that Lestock's division gained on them. He made his position clear in the following words: "But supposing they had been seen from my masthead, yet I

ahead to endeavour to detain the enemy. But they found that he should have continued to pursue in accordance with the Articles of War. As the Articles of War laid down that an Admiral must not forbear from chase, the Court held that he was bound to continue it, and brushed aside his reasonings as to the strategic circumstances which affected his decision. This view, that an Admiral was bound, whatever the circumstances, by the Articles of War, Mathews opposed with perfectly sound reasoning. He argued that a Commander-in-Chief of a fleet is invested with discretionary power as to when to give and when to forbear from chase, and that the whole tenour of his own instructions emphasised this power. The fleet was to be employed for the common cause of the allies, and if it appeared to him, he said, "to be more likely to promote the advantage of that service by forbearing than by continuing that chase, certainly I stood authorised by my instructions to follow those measures accordingly." The Court however would not have it so, and agreed that he was not justified by the circumstances in committing a breach of the Articles of War.

<sup>1</sup> It is worth recording that the officer of the watch first informed Captain Long, who refused to waken the Admiral, as he said Mathews had left orders to be called at 3.30. The officer of the watch insisted on the importance of the enemy's movement being known to the Admiral, and Long gave him leave to call him himself and take the rough edge of the Admiral's tongue. There was no rough edge. Mathews hastened on deck, and 5 min. later the signal to make sail was abroad. The name of the officer was Lieut. Bate. His action may be commended to the notice of officers of to-day who may find themselves in a similar situation.

<sup>2</sup> The masts were seen by sixty-two witnesses; only three, however, said they brought the hulls above the horizon, even from the masthead.

should not have pursued them for the reasons already given. I was in hopes to have regained Hyères Bay or the Coast of Italy, but the wind would not permit me. I therefore judged it proper to look into the Bay of Rosas, imagining that some of the enemy's ships might have put in there, and hoping also, by shewing myself on the coast, to alarm and intimidate the enemy from carrying on their intended embarkation for Italy. I have the pleasure to affirm that that part of my conduct fully answered my hopes and thereby saved Italy, which was of much greater consequence to the common cause than taking the 'Real,' which was all that the most sanguine could reasonably expect from continuing the chase."

The question of the continuance of the chase is one of the most important features of the battle. Mathews's reasons for not chasing have been given at some length, and no description of the battle would serve any useful purpose without some discussion of this point.

To examine this, let us try to see what would, and then what might, have happened if he had continued chase. Were his anticipations that the capture of the 'Real' was the most he could hope for justified by events, and was Italy saved by his return? He took a broad view of the duties of the fleet under his command; but did he take a sufficiently broad one? It is not enough to dismiss the case with the bald statement that the fleet has nothing to think of but the destruction of the enemy. Both theory and practice shew that the destruction of the enemy's fleet is the best means of achieving the ends in war: what is of interest and value is to consider how the application of that rule would have acted in this particular case.

In the first place, if we follow the movements of the allied fleet after the action, we find that the Spanish squadron was reduced on the 13th February to half its original size. The 'Poder' had been lost; the 'Neptuno,' 'Oriente' and 'Constante' had left the line and returned to Spain; the 'Hércules' parted company in distress on the morning of the 13th<sup>1</sup>. Of the seven remaining sail, the 'Real' had been severely mauled but was in a condition to fight, though not to manoeuvre, and would have been a great hindrance to the squadron.

On the afternoon of the 14th, when near Cape Creux, these remaining Spaniards bore away before the gale and parted company from the French<sup>2</sup>, in search of shelter to refit. They made very slow progress and did not arrive off Carthagena till the 26th February, in which port they were joined by de Court's squadron. During all these days those

<sup>1</sup> *Journal of M. de Lage*. N.R. Society, vol. XL, p. 251.

<sup>2</sup> *Journal of M. de Court*. *The History of the Mediterranean Fleet from 1741 to 1744*. London, 1745, p. 252, makes the Spaniards part company on the 13th.

squadrons were separated, and would have fallen an easy prize to even a portion of Mathews's force<sup>1</sup>. It is difficult to believe that a resolute pursuit would not have brought the British fleet up either with the whole allied fleet or with one or other of the squadrons. Mathews's acceptance of the impossibility of doing more than taking the 'Real' prevented this most desirable result. If his premises that he could not overhaul the enemy were correct, it may be argued that he had weighty reasons for abandoning the chase, but had he any right to make that assumption without further testing it? It is open to doubt that the premise was correct, in which case the further arguments do not apply; and the doctrine that so long as the enemy are in sight the pursuit must be maintained is undeniably corroborated by the experience of this case.

Moreover it must be observed that Mathews took no serious steps to ascertain the strength of the enemy. He had his frigates with him; if he had detached them to bring him information<sup>2</sup>, he would have found that, on the morning of the 13th, he had a force of no more than sixteen French and seven Spaniards to deal with—twenty-three ships, one of which was a cripple, and four were only heavy frigates. It would not have been impossible to have made up a superior force out of his ships that had not been engaged and were wholly undamaged aloft; his wounded ships might have returned to Hyères and would have been a sufficient force to prevent the invasion<sup>3</sup>.

Thus Mathews did not assure himself of the state of the enemy, and made assumptions which required further proof before they should have been accepted. Even if we give all weight to the disturbing influence of Italy, and to his feeling that he must return thither as soon as he could, that every mile he was drawn away endangered both his fleet and Lombardy, and that therefore he must make up his mind at once, he stands open to the accusation that he did not acquaint himself fully with the situation of the enemy before he made up his mind, and that it lay within his power to have done so.

Looked at therefore from the point of view of local strategy, the return was a mistake. How does it stand the test of examination from the point of the larger strategy of the war—the strategy that looks,

<sup>1</sup> On the 21st February the Spanish squadron sighted and should have captured an English convoy of four store ships proceeding with the 'Newcastle,' 'Leopard' and 'Antelope' to Mahon. Letter of Capt. Fox, H.M.S. 'Newcastle.' Also *Journal of M. de Lage*. The convoy was sighted about 10 P.M.

<sup>2</sup> He did detach the 'Guernsey,' Capt. Cornish, but he did not wait for her report.

<sup>3</sup> There were four Spanish ships left behind in Toulon for want of crews; but it was thought possible the French might man them to convoy the army.



not only at the immediate area of operations, but at the results which movements in that area may have on others more remote? Mathews took a wider view than many of the writers who glibly condemn him and limit their gaze to the water; he never lost sight of the armies in the Alps, in Dauphiné, Naples and Lombardy. But he had still further to look, and of this his instructions should have reminded him. "If, contrary to expectation, the Spanish and French squadrons should separately or jointly repass the Straits in order to go into Cadiz or to proceed on any other expedition: and if by that means no naval force, or only one much inferior to yours, will be left in the Mediterranean, you are in that case to employ H.M.'s squadron under your command in such manner as you may think most for H.M.'s service and for the destruction of the Maritime force of the enemy, by pursuing or following the Spanish fleet, or any other fleet, that may be joined with them, *wherever they go*, taking care however to leave constantly on the coast of Italy such a force as may be sufficient to oppose any naval force that can be brought against it there, and for the defence of H.M.'s allies in Italy, and for the security and protection of the trade of H.M.'s subjects." Such were the instructions, dated April 2nd, 1742. If the enemy left the Mediterranean, Mathews was to follow them wherever they might go. This instruction would seem to have been a permanent governing clause in all Mediterranean orders<sup>1</sup>, extending back as far as the beginning of the 18th century, possibly earlier, and its application to the present case may be seen if we consider how the situation might have developed. The French were, at that very moment, contemplating an invasion of England. Plans for invasion had taken every form, from crossing the sea by surprise to obtaining the command by fighting. If it had been proposed to obtain the necessary command by a concentration of the French and Spanish Mediterranean and Atlantic sea forces—and that this might have been planned is shewn by the fact that it was actually suggested not many years later—a reinforcement of at least 18 ships would have been able to join the Brest and Rochefort squadrons. How nearly balanced the French and British sea forces in the Channel were in the beginning of 1744 will be seen later; such a reinforcement would have left the issue in small doubt, and the conquest of Lombardy, which Mathews so greatly and so properly feared, might have been made possible by a naval action in the British Channel, which would have removed Great Britain from the side of the allies. So long as that naval force of the enemy was in existence it possessed powers of influencing the campaign by disputing the sea-communications of the

<sup>1</sup> Under such a clause, or in such a tradition, Nelson's departure from the Mediterranean to the West Indies in 1805 excites no surprise.

allies, and it was clearly the duty of the Mediterranean squadron to destroy it. By not continuing the pursuit Mathews abandoned his one great chance of obtaining a definite decision which would have left the sea command in the Mediterranean undisputed, and the Channel and Atlantic communications secure from serious attack.

The preceding narrative will have shewn the influences at work during the action which contributed to the miscarriage. These influences however will not by themselves account wholly for the failure. It is insufficient to say that the cause of the miscarriage lay in the long period of peace which preceded the battle. That an improper training and tendency of thought during peace have the highest results on war and produced their natural results in this particular case admits of no denial: but peace had not been so profound in the preceding years as to cause men's thoughts to forget what war was. England had at this moment been at war for over four years, and one of the Admirals concerned, whose conduct was in the highest degree contributory to the failure—Lestock—had been employed in the extensive operations at Carthage. Many of the captains had been in action, and the blockade of Toulon, itself an extensive operation of war, had lasted for two years, during which the fleet might have been engaged at any moment with one or both of the squadrons of the allies.

One of the most important causes of the failure was certainly the relations that existed between the Admirals. As we have seen, Mathews had early represented his poor opinion of Lestock to the Duke of Newcastle; and as late as October 1st, 1743, he had represented that the Vice-Admiral was unfit for the command by reason of his health. "Mr Lestock's indisposition," he then wrote, "was not the palsy as had been told me, but a very severe fit of the gout...He is now, and has been for some time in as good a state of health and as capable of doing his duty as he can ever hope for. A cripple I found him and so he will ever continue<sup>1</sup>." Lestock, on the other hand had evidently chafed for a long time at the position in which he found himself, subordinate to a commander whom he disliked, whose capacity he doubted, whose position he had hoped to hold, and who from the time he took command had shewed a lack of conciliation and trust towards him. The manner in which Mathews on his arrival publicly rebuked Lestock was not a good prelude to their partnership. It seems evident that from the beginning the Commander-in-Chief did not take his Vice-Admiral into his confidence. There is a letter from Lestock to the Duke of Newcastle which is eloquent in its very brevity and expresses far better than a

<sup>1</sup> Mathews to Duke of Newcastle. In *Sec. of State's Letters*, 4112.



longer one Lestock's state of mind. Dated October 28th, 1742, it ran thus:

'Neptune,' Hières Road.

My Lord Duke

By your messenger to Admiral Mathews, I take leave to address your Grace, but as an Idle person in the Fleet, have only to pray I may be Thought

My Lord Duke

the remainder, the signature, is cut off. A man must be in a bitter mood to write in such a manner. To add to this there is the incident, already referred to, of Lestock's curt reception when he came on board the night before the action<sup>1</sup>. Lestock also knew that Mathews had in his pocket a commission as Admiral of the White which it was in his power to give to Lestock and also permission to transfer to him the command of the Mediterranean fleet, and that he withheld both<sup>2</sup>.

Thus there was an insurmountable barrier preventing the cordial cooperation of these two commanders. Both were invalids, the one suffering from the gravel and the other from the gout, while the latter, whose temper would not be improved by his physical condition, was chafing (and not without cause) at being treated as if he did not exist. While nothing can excuse the senior from holding such an attitude towards his second-in-command, nor the junior for allowing his not unnatural resentment to affect his conduct, the Duke of Newcastle, who had been made aware from the beginning of their personal relations must also be held highly to blame for leaving them to work together. This point was not lost sight of in Parliament; several speakers expressed the opinion that those responsible for the appointment of two such antipathetic persons were guilty of grave neglect, and urged that as it was the duty of the administration to know the characters of officers appointed to high command, so they were also responsible if the choice made were a bad one. The cause of the miscarriage, said Alderman Heathcote, was ultimately owing to his Majesty's making

<sup>1</sup> *Parliamentary History*, vol. XIII. p. 1264.

<sup>2</sup> The similarity between the relations of Mathews and Lestock and those of Persano and his subordinates before the battle of Lissa is very striking. D'Amico, Persano's chief of staff, was not on speaking terms with his admiral and when it was necessary to communicate it was done through a youngster. Admiral Vacca had a poor opinion of Persano. "I begin to feel anxious," he wrote on July 3rd, 1866, "not on account of the enemy, but for the conduct of our *friends*." Persano shewed the same lack of taking his subordinates into his confidence, and the same absence of any general tactical idea. "There were five tactical formations known to us, but no indication was given of any idea of action, any conception or principle as the foundation of our operations." The relations between Cialdini and la Marmora, which led to the disaster at Custoza, furnish a further extraordinarily striking example of the effects of the relations between commanders.

choice of two Admirals for the command of the squadron who had "a contempt and aversion for each other": and the sentence undoubtedly expresses a large measure of truth.

Another contributory cause was the rigidity of the Fighting Instructions which Mathews had done nothing to make more pliable.

The unexpected manner in which Mathews delivered his attack produced a measure of uncertainty in the minds of some of his captains as to how they should act, and the problem was complicated by the separation of the ships ahead of the 'Constante' from the remainder of their division. Instead of an orderly battle resulting from the van of the British fleet steering for the van of the enemy's and there engaging them, a wholly different situation was created. Mathews had made no provision to meet such a case by giving his captains liberty to act according to circumstances. Northumberland in 1636 and Vernon in 1739 had foreseen that the uncertainty of a sea fight and the impossibility of signalling made it necessary to rely upon the discretion and valour of their subordinates<sup>1</sup>, and it is not improbable that a local order to the same effect would have served Mathews well, by removing any doubts as to what the ships of his own division in particular should do both in the initial stages of the action and in its subsequent development.

The effect of Article 21 was far-reaching<sup>2</sup>. The doctrine it expressed was held in its most rigid form at this time, as the judgments of the Courts Martial shew. No ships could leave the line without the specific direction of the Commander-in-Chief, and no fault was found with officers for not engaging closely enough provided it could be proved that they were in the line. Centralisation was the mode, and this is particularly emphasised in the opinions expressed on the subject of covering the fireship's approach. The Court laid down that a ship ought not to bear down to cover a fireship's attack unless she had orders to do so, and although the 'Dorsetshire' was close to the fireship and could have gone down with her and have protected her from the fire of the Spanish rear, the majority held that as Burrish had received no orders for carrying out that duty he was in no degree responsible for not doing what would seem to be an obvious duty, for it was an accepted maxim of the time that an uncovered attack by a fireship must fail<sup>3</sup>.

The same line of thought is seen in the Court's condemnation of

<sup>1</sup> Nelson's sentence in his memorandum that "in case signals can neither be seen or perfectly understood no captain can do very wrong if he places his ship alongside that of an enemy," is another enunciation of the same idea.

<sup>2</sup> For further remarks upon this interesting article see Appendix on tactics.

<sup>3</sup> Yet for all this Burrish did receive orders to cover the fireship, sent and delivered to him by Bentley; the Court's statement ignores this.

the captains of the three van ships. Although it was universally admitted that these ships, by keeping the wind of the enemy, delayed his tacking and hampered his movement, and although Rowley had openly praised their conduct and intimated that their action had been admirable<sup>1</sup>, all three captains were condemned for not having borne down and engaged the enemy in a line with the Rear-Admiral, their divisional leader. The contradictions of the addition to Article 1 and Article 19 weighed not at all, and thus the Fighting Instructions which had grown up from a real need of discipline in a fleet, and had been an expression of tactical thought, produced the result of stifling initiative, while at the same time furnishing a shield behind which the less zealous could shelter themselves.

The inaction of the ships astern of Mathews received no reproof from the Admiral. No signal for closer action then existed and the only means of communication was by boat: but except to the 'Dorsetshire' no messages were sent to the ships which shewed shyness, and Mathews contended that he was unable to see whether his ships were as closely engaged as they should be owing to the smoke; yet men in the 'Marlborough' could see the 'Essex' to windward, and it seems strange that she should not be visible from the 'Namur.' Possibly the explanation lies in the fact that the Admiral was busy commanding his own ship. His flag captain had his arm shot off at the first broadside, which, Mathews wrote, "was a great misfortune to me as the whole conduct of the ship fell to my share, as well as of the Fleet, which God knows cannot in the nature in things be such as a commanding officer should do when he himself is engaged." Thus he was acting as captain of the ship and giving instructions for repairs aloft, ordering a hawser to be got up to the foretopmast head to stay the mast, and sending men aloft to lash the heads of the topmasts, receiving the reports of the boatswain and carpenter on the state of the spars and rigging. That by itself was enough to distract his attention from his command of the fleet; but in addition he took a hand in fighting a gun. "I saw the Admiral myself" said the coxswain of the barge in giving testimony to Mathews's courage, "with a handspike at the breech of one of the guns." Both his seamanship and his gallantry were unquestioned, but they should not have been allowed to interfere with his greater duty of fighting the fleet. Shortage of officers—he had only seven lieutenants and three were out of the ship taking messages—may have contributed towards

<sup>1</sup> Lieut. Samuel Spence of the 'Warwick,' who went on board the 'Barfleur' on the evening of the 11th, gave evidence that Admiral Rowley said "he wished that every ship in the fleet had done their duty so well as the 'Stirling Castle' and 'Warwick,' notwithstanding they had not fired a shot, and we must have had a glorious day of it." *Court Martial on Captain Cooper.*

causing him to superintend the repairs aloft, but there was no reason for him to take on the duties of a lower gun number.

Rowley's leading of his division, his disposition of his ships, and his selection of adversaries, were unquestionably other contributory causes of the failure. As the narrative has shewn, Rowley led down to the French Admiral and left at least four ships ahead disengaged, while it also gave him a larger force in rear than was wanted. It left the enemy's van free to double, it prevented a full development of the powers of offence of the van and it put his captains ahead of him in a most difficult situation. Three at least of the captains rose to the situation and Rowley did not withhold his praise from them for their behaviour, openly saying that same evening that they saved the situation; but it was he who should have saved the situation by leading further ahead, as he might have done.

The failure was a failure of command; neither gunnery, nor seamanship, both of which the fleet possessed in abundance, could compensate for a deficient tactical system which depended so greatly upon instructions and forbade initiative of action.

Lestock complained that the failure was due to lack of practice in forming line; but in the conditions of the battle this defect was of comparatively small consequence. Moreover, so far as ability to form the line went, Lestock was himself the officer who, with an independent command for many months at Hyères, was partly responsible for this very omission<sup>1</sup>. Even if the divisions of the fleet had formed the most perfect line at a half cable apart, it would not have saved the situation: it would not have made up for the lack of the driving power of a properly understood doctrine.

So great a miscarriage as this battle could not pass without investigation. Mathews called upon Lestock as soon as possible to explain his behaviour. Lestock answered tartly; Mathews suspended him and ordered him home. Mathews himself followed later, at his own request; and the storm then broke out in London, culminating, at the instance of the House of Commons, in a series of Courts Martial embracing eleven captains, Lestock, and finally Mathews himself.

The nature of the charges<sup>2</sup>, and the decisions, refute the idea that Mathews was cashiered for breaking the line; and the epigram that Mathews lacked head and Lestock heart is not less inaccurate,

<sup>1</sup> The log and journal of his flagship shew only one occasion in which Lestock exercised the fleet in forming the line—the occasion is referred to in the preceding narrative.

<sup>2</sup> See Appendix III, for a summary of the charges, Mathews's defence and the decisions of the Court.



if indeed it does not convey a more misleading impression. The manner in which the attack was made figured largely in the charges; but it was a portion, and not the major portion, of the whole. The Court's decision upon the third article is conclusive in dispelling the idea that Mathews was judged and punished solely on the score of disobeying the Fighting Instructions. They found on the fourth article, as indeed they could not do otherwise than find, that Mathews bore down before the line of battle was formed; and on the fifth that he brought the fleet into danger by acting as he did; but this finding was only by so narrow a majority—11 to 8—as to constitute no strong expression of opinion as to his conduct in that particular. The verdict on the sixth article is no less indicative of the mental attitude of the Court. By 14 to 5 votes they decided that the charge of acting contrary to the Instructions and bringing the fleet into danger was not proved.

While it was undeniable that Mathews in attacking as he did acted contrary to the Instructions, the whole tenour of the cross examination, and the conclusions arrived at, shew that what influenced the Court in imposing their sentence was the feeling that Mathews had not fought hard enough. They acquitted him of hauling out of action with the 'Real'; but found that he could and should have returned to the fight with her; that he did not engage the Spanish rear with advantage; that he failed to support the 'Marlborough' and 'Poder' but retired before the enemy, abandoning the latter; that he did not take every step to keep touch with the enemy on the nights of the 11th and 12th to ensure bringing them to action on the following day; and that he could have continued the pursuit of the enemy but did not do so until 2.30 A.M. on the 12th. And, although there was great difference of opinion on the critical question as to whether he was justified in abandoning the chase of the enemy on the 13th, a majority of 11 to 8 decided against him.

Generalisations are invariably dangerous and only too frequently inaccurate; and that which has been commonly accepted concerning the verdict on Mathews is no exception. If any generalisations can be made, those more closely approximating to truth will be that (i) Mathews prepared insufficiently for the battle, (ii) did not fight hard enough, and (iii) failed to take every step that lay in his power to destroy an enemy with whom he was in contact for several days. Nelson's remarks upon Calder furnish a fairly concise commentary upon the reason which guided the Court's decision. "He appears to have had the ships at Ferrol more in his head than the squadrons in sight...He lays stress upon other considerations than fighting the enemy's squadrons, if he could have done it, *which he denies to be*



possible. I have ventured to recommend Calder to keep to that; *prove it* and his character is retrieved<sup>1</sup>." In the same way as Calder thought of the ships in Ferrol, and Byng of the safety of Gibraltar, so Mathews thought both of the Brest squadron and the coast of Italy. Calder, Byng and Mathews each in his time was condemned. The commander who has the enemy's fleet in sight and for thought of what will happen if he be defeated fails to bring about a decision will share the fate of those unfortunate officers.

Mathews's condemnation not unnaturally caused great surprise. The public, believing that he had fought well, were puzzled to discover the reason. Some supposed that the verdict was the result of political feelings; others that it was intended to be a lesson to commanders not to be haughty in their dealings with their colleagues. The evidence was never made public, and the result of this reticence, whether intentional or no, was unfortunate, for the true lessons of the battle were obscured, and the profit which should have derived from them was lost; while a legend grew up which has done great harm to tactical thought in succeeding generations. The unwisdom of not probing such failures to the bottom and publishing the result, at whatever cost of reputation to Ministers or officers concerned, cannot be over-estimated.

The verdict upon Mathews only increased the perplexity caused by Lestock's acquittal, which had preceded it. In this Court Martial the charges were set out, in a manner similar to that of Mathews, in seven articles<sup>2</sup>. The interest in the trial lies principally in the fact that the Vice-Admiral was acquitted on all charges in the face of the strongest evidence.

For everything that was done or left undone by Lestock the Court found justification, notwithstanding that their findings occasionally contradicted each other. They found, for example, that he brought to in line on the evening of the 10th, but that if he had not done so he would still have been correct not to move without orders after the signal to bring to. They found that he was right in not getting into station during the night as he might not make sail without orders, but that he was equally right and to be commended for making sail in the morning before the Admiral did so, and still without orders. They found that he made every effort to get into action during the day and never reduced sail, but also that if he had reduced sail he would still have been right. And they found, finally, that even if he could have got into action it was unnecessary, so far as the result was concerned,

<sup>1</sup> Corbett, *Campaign of Trafalgar*, p. 207.

<sup>2</sup> See Appendix IV.

for him to do so, as, without his division, there was a superiority over the enemy. In such a sequence of findings, and in consideration of the evidence to the contrary, it can hardly be wondered that people drew the conclusion that the decision had been made on party lines, and smacked rather of political affairs than of justice; and that the common report grew up that the Court was determined to acquit not Lestock the Admiral, but Lestock the Whig, and acted up to that determination.

## CHAPTER III

### THE FRENCH ATTACK IN HOME WATERS

THE attack upon the British fleet in the Mediterranean was part of a larger and more comprehensive scheme by which France proposed to open actual hostilities with England.

In October 1743 rumours reached the Admiralty of unusual activity in the French Atlantic ports as well as in the Mediterranean. Similar reports had been received in the preceding years, but they had come to nothing; and for some time nothing of a confirmatory nature was learned. But in the middle of November, in a letter from Paris dated Nov.  $\frac{1}{2}$ <sup>3</sup>, very definite information was sent that orders had been given for all men of war in the French ports to be got ready for sea. No exceptional steps were taken on receipt of this information, but a month later, when more detailed news was received relating to preparations at Toulon and the ports in the Bay, three ships<sup>1</sup> were ordered to reinforce Mathews, and the 'Phoenix' 20, Captain Brodrick, was sent to sea with instructions "to endeavour to inform yourself from such ships, vessels or boats that you may meet with, and also from people from the shore, of what naval preparations are making in the port of Brest, what ships are in commission, their number and force, and in what forwardness for the sea; and particularly whether any ships of war have lately put to sea from thence, their number and force, and whither bound<sup>2</sup>...you are likewise to inform yourself of what naval preparations are making at Rochefort, or in any other parts of West France<sup>3</sup>." So soon as he should have intelligence that could be depended upon, Brodrick was directed to make the best of his way to the first English port he could reach and transmit his account by express.

The order reached Brodrick on the 17th. He swayed up his yards and topmasts at 7 A.M. on the 18th, unmoored and hove short at 10, and by noon, the wind coming favourably off the land, he put to sea and was off Ushant by 4 P.M. next day. He stood in to Bertheaume Bay on the 22nd where he learned that Admiral de Roquefeuil was

<sup>1</sup> 'Boyne' 80, 'Chichester' 80, and 'Burford' 70. Orders of December 12th. Cf. Instructions to de Court, Appendix II, 8th paragraph.

<sup>2</sup> It had been reported that six ships had sailed recently, bound for the Mediterranean.

<sup>3</sup> Instructions dated December 15th. Out letters.

lying in Brest water with nine men of war. From a fishing boat off Conquet he heard that some ships had already sailed. On the 26th he learned there were no ships in Port Louis, and on the 1st January he heard there were nine at Rochefort.

On the 7th January Brodrick, feeling it was incumbent on him to make sure more rapidly of what was going on, stood right into Brest water itself, and as an excuse for his presence, asked to fill up his water. Here he found twenty-one ships—twelve of from 74 to 64 guns, five of 64 to 54, and four frigates, all ready for sea. The French Admiral told him he could send no boat ashore, but that such water as was wanted would be carried out to him in the Bay. To gain time for making observations Brodrick asked for 22 tons, which came alongside next morning, and of which he took what he wanted—some six tons—and pumped the rest overboard. His continued presence was not desired by the French Admiral, who sent a message that afternoon that he was to leave at once, and that failing his doing so he would be detained. Early therefore on the morning of the 9th Brodrick sailed, and, after waiting on and off outside Brest for another 24 hours to see if the French were coming out, and whither they were going if they did so, he feared to delay any longer with his important news and made all the sail he could for Plymouth where he anchored at 5 P.M. on the 10th and hurried his information to the Admiralty by express.

While Brodrick was cruising off Brest the Admiralty were taking steps in anticipation of his report. Our Ambassador in Paris had sent information that a secret treaty had been signed between France and Spain by the terms of which France was to supply seventeen ships of war and 30,000 men to Spain, of which the ships were to be ready by the 5th January to join the Spanish squadron at Toulon and crush Admiral Mathews. Orders were therefore sent out on December 22nd and the succeeding days to complete all the ships in the home ports<sup>1</sup> to four months provisions with all possible despatch. Admirals Davers and Martin were ordered to hoist their flags at Portsmouth and Spithead, and two more small ships<sup>2</sup> were (Dec. 27th) to go off the French coast with instructions similar to those of the 'Phoenix,' and also to range along the coast from Boulogne to Ushant looking into all the ports on their cruise. On the 26th Dec. a hot press was ordered, all captains being empowered to impress so many "seamen, seafaring men and persons whose occupations and callings are to work in vessels and

<sup>1</sup> 22nd December. 'St George,' 'Sandwich,' 'Shrewsbury,' 'Northumberland,' 'Princess Royal,' 'Princess Amelia,' 'Cornwall,' and 'Plymouth' to complete to four months provisions with all despatch and hold themselves in constant readiness for sea. Orders and Instructions.

<sup>2</sup> The 'Drake' sloop and the 'Squirrel' 20.



boats upon rivers" as should be required to complete the complements of the fleet. On the 30th the 'Dreadnought,' which had been about to refit, was directed not to do so, but to proceed immediately to Spithead.

Some information of a reassuring nature appears to have been received on the 1st or 2nd January, for the orders to the 'Dreadnought' were cancelled on the latter day and her refit was to be proceeded with; while the 'Plymouth,' which lay at the port of her own name preparing to join the Channel squadron at Spithead, was told to remain there and pick up some victuallers bound to Jamaica. This calm lasted for several days, for as late as the 9th of January the 'Duke' and 'Cornwall,' with four bomb vessels, were ordered to proceed to the Mediterranean with the trade.

Three days later Brodrick's report reached the Admiralty. A volume of instructions was at once issued. The 'Squirrel' and 'Drake,' which had not yet sailed, and the 'Granado' were ordered to sea<sup>1</sup> "to make the best observation you can of their [the French squadron's] number and strength without going into Brest water or exposing your ship to danger, and when you have gotten as perfect an account as you can, you are to return to the first port in England you shall be able to make and send a particular account thereof by express." All the ships at the various ports were ordered to assemble with all possible despatch at Spithead. The orders to ships about to refit were again cancelled, the 'Ipswich' which was in quarantine was released by a special dispensation of the Privy Council, and the two ships about to sail for the Mediterranean were detained<sup>2</sup>. A notice was inserted in the *Gazette* ordering all officers and men belonging to the ships intended for service to return at once to their ships whether they were absent with or without leave, on pain of forfeiture of all back wages and of punishment for desertion. The 'Phoenix' was ordered to put to sea again and proceed off Brest "and if you find the said French ships are still there you are then to cruise on that coast to the southward of the Saintes, in order to watch their motions; and if they put to sea you are to follow them at a proper distance to observe their proceedings, and when you shall have made such observations as may be necessary, and shall be fully satisfied of the course they steer, you are to return to England...<sup>3</sup>." Similar instructions were sent to the 'Dolphin'; and a sloop, the

<sup>1</sup> The instructions to 'Squirrel' and 'Drake' are dated 16th January, 'Granado's' are of 18th January.

<sup>2</sup> The Admiralty wrote for instructions regarding these two ships on 17th January, as to whether they should sail. The Duke of Newcastle ordered them to stay. Sec. of State's Letters, January 17th, 1743/4.

<sup>3</sup> Signed by Lord Winchelsea, Dr Geo. Lee, Admiral Charles Hardy and Mr John Philipson. January 16th, 1744. Orders and Instructions.

'Ferret,' was ordered to proceed with all possible despatch to Gibraltar. Her instructions ran: "and if when you arrive there you shall be informed that no French squadron has passed into the Mediterranean, you are to cruise diligently in the Gut in order to discover the said French squadron, for which purpose you are to keep a good look out; and upon their appearing in sight you are without a moment's loss of time to make the best of your way to Hyères Road or where else Admiral Mathews or the Commander-in-Chief of his Majesty's Fleet in the Mediterranean may be, and give him notice thereof." The 'Ferret' carried instructions to the two ships—'Lowestoft' and 'Solebay'—which were stationed at Gibraltar, to cruise with the two sloops and a zebeck in the Gut, and if the French appeared, the best sailing 20-gun ship, a sloop and the 'Ferret' were to sail at once and inform Mathews; the other sloop or a 20-gun ship was to proceed to England and give notice by express. "But if there shall be only your own ship," the instructions to each captain went on, "besides the 'Ferret' sloop in the Gut, neither of them is to come to England but both to proceed separately with the intelligence to Mr Mathews." Orders also were sent overland to Lisbon<sup>1</sup> to any 50-gun ships that might be in the Tagus to proceed immediately and join Mathews.

The instructions shew that the intention was to provide against an attack either in home waters or in the Mediterranean, and that the Admiralty did not venture to say which was the more probable. At the same time no great danger was apparently thought to be threatening the kingdom, for on Jan. 18th the 'Biddeford,' 20, was ordered to escort trade to the West Indies, accompanied 150 leagues into the sea by the 'Kinsale,' 40, which was then to return to Spithead; the 'Hector,' 40, was to go to St Helena to meet some home coming East India ships, and the 'Ipswich' was to pay off and transfer her crew to the 'Royal Sovereign.' The 'Sutherland,' 50, was ordered to refit at Plymouth instead of coming to Spithead. The majority of the above vessels were frigates, but if any danger to the kingdom in the form of invasion had been feared it is probable they would have been kept in home waters to deal with the vessels carrying the troops.

Brodrick sailed again in the 'Phoenix'<sup>2</sup> on the 19th January and was off Ushant at 5 P.M. on the 21st. Next morning he met the 'Drake' and 'Dolphin' which had looked into Brest water the previous evening. They had seen the French squadron, twenty-two sail in number, still lying at anchor, and had closed them sufficiently to observe that the quarters of the Admirals' ships were painted red<sup>3</sup>—a fact that led to

<sup>1</sup> Out letters, January 16th, 1744.

<sup>2</sup> Captain's Journal, 'Phoenix.'

<sup>3</sup> Captains' Letters. Geary (of 'Dolphin').

their identification later by a British ship which met them at sea in thick weather. After communicating this intelligence to Brodrick, the 'Dolphin' stood away and took up a position to the southward of the Saintes where she cruised, but saw nothing, until the 29th, when she was joined by the 'Granado' and received orders to return at once to England.

Brodrick meanwhile cruised for the next few days off the Saintes. At 1 P.M. on the 26th he was rewarded by sighting the whole French fleet coming out of Broad Sound. He at once dropped down close to them and kept sight of their lights all night. By 4 A.M. next day the French fleet was in the open sea with the 'Phoenix' observing them about three miles off. Throughout this day (Jan. 27) the French steered to the northward under an easy sail, Brodrick steadily observing them from a close station to windward till he lost sight of their lights at 7 P.M.; they then bore W. by S. and were steering about N.E. by N. under reefed topsails to a fresh E.S.E. wind. When the next morning broke nothing was to be seen of them; the weather had come on thick, a hard N.E. by E. wind with driving snow and a heavy sea. Thinking he might have overrun the enemy, Brodrick made a board to the southward for two hours, but saw nothing. Time was passing. The enemy when last seen had been standing towards the coast of England; to attempt to continue the search was to lose time in warning the Admiralty, and Brodrick decided that the intelligence he had gained was sufficiently conclusive. He therefore tacked again to the northward to return to England. At 11 A.M. he got sight of four French ships beating to windward. At 5 P.M. he saw another eleven going large, possibly to pick up the scattered units, and with this accumulation of intelligence he hastened for Plymouth where he anchored at 5 P.M. on the 30th January and brought his news to London.

Brodrick's despatch reached the Ministry at 9 P.M. on Feb. 1st<sup>1</sup>. On the same day another piece of news of the most serious significance arrived from Paris. Prince Charles Edward had left Rome and landed in France contrary to all the treaty provisions which excluded the Stuart princes from French territory.

These two momentous matters were discussed at a meeting of the Committee of Council next day, at which, among others, Sir John Norris and Marshal Wade were present<sup>2</sup>. The connexion between the movements of the Stuart Prince and the sailing of the Brest squadron was too obvious to be passed over. France was evidently about to undertake

<sup>1</sup> *S.P. Dom. Various V.*

<sup>2</sup> Minutes of the Privy Council. Newcastle Papers, Add. MS. 33004. There were sixteen members present. *S.P. Dom. Various V.*

some operations against us, and, whatever these might be, ships must be got to sea to frustrate them. Norris was ordered to proceed at once to Portsmouth and take command of the fleet. His instructions ran as follows, and were signed by the King personally:

"Upon receiving these Our instructions you are to repair immediately to Portsmouth and take under your command all our ships at Spithead, and all other ships that are now at home, or that come home<sup>1</sup>.

"And whereas We have received certain advices that the French fleet, consisting of 21 ships of war, sailed from Brest on the 26th past; and on the 27th was seen 16 leagues off Ushant steering towards the coast of this Kingdom or of Our Kingdom of Ireland, We have ordered copies of the said advices to be herewith delivered to you; and We have also ordered to be delivered to you herewith copies of the advices We have received of the Pretender's eldest son having left Rome, and of his arrival at Antibes in France. It is Our pleasure that upon your arrival at Portsmouth you should act with all possible diligence to get as many of Our ships as possible in readiness to put to sea with the utmost expedition: and you are to procure the best intelligence you shall be able of the motions of the French fleet, and if you shall find that they are gone towards any part of Our Kingdom of Great Britain or Ireland you are to follow them as soon as you have a force sufficient, and to take the most effectual measures to prevent the making any descent upon any part of Our said Kingdoms; and for that purpose you are to attack them and to take sink burn or otherwise destroy them in the best manner you shall be able. And you are also to take particular care to protect and defend the trade and navigation of our subjects.

"We have directed that there should herewith be put into your hands a copy of the orders which We have ordered to be sent to the Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland for the safety and security of that Kingdom."

The instructions concluded by directing the Admiral to communicate with the Secretary of State and the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty as to the state of the fleet; to transmit accounts of proceedings and intelligence; and to follow "such orders and instructions as you shall receive from Us under Our Sign Manual, or from one of Our principal Secretaries of State or from Our Commissioners for executing the office of Our High Admiral of Great Britain for the time being."

At the same time a letter was sent to Mathews, informing him that the Brest squadron had sailed to an unknown destination, and might

<sup>1</sup> This clause, placing him in command of every ship in home waters, was the subject of a serious remonstrance from the Admiralty. See *post*, p. 87.



be intending either to make a descent in the kingdom or to join the fleet at Toulon. The fact that the squadron had stood to the northward when the wind was favourable for going to the Mediterranean now rendered it improbable that Toulon was their objective; but if it should turn out that the move was a feint, and the Mediterranean was their destination, a reinforcement under a junior flag officer would be sent to him.

Among other precautions taken, all Custom House officers were directed to transmit any intelligence they could get of the Brest squadron, while the agents of the packet boats at Dover and Harwich were instructed to stop any person answering the description of "a short squat man sent from Rome with secret commissions to England: he wears his own brown hair commonly tied in a bag. He speaks bad Italian."

Norris proceeded at once to Portsmouth. Here he found twelve<sup>1</sup> ships of 50 guns and upwards lying at Spithead, and three<sup>2</sup> large ships in the harbour ready for sea. The 'Victory' 100 was expected from the Nore with the first fair wind. Besides these ships there were the 'Princess Royal' at the Nore, the 'Princess Amelia' at Plymouth and the 'Dreadnought' at Sheerness<sup>3</sup>.

For several days things were quiet and no more news of the French was received. On the 6th Feb. Captain Griffin of the 'Captain' came in from a cruise and reported to Norris that he had fallen in with two Dutch doggers on Feb. 4th which had seen the French to the westward of the Casquets. As by later information Norris was already assured that they were still to the westward of the Lizard he was quite easy in his mind for the present. The Duke of Newcastle was however beginning to get anxious, and to importune the Admiral with suggestions as to what he should do. Certain intelligence, he wrote on the 6th Feb., had been received from Paris that the French Court had assured the Spanish ambassador at Paris that the Brest squadron would sail to prevent any reinforcement from joining Mathews and would attack any British ships they should meet; this being so, their intention was probably to remain in the Channel, and Norris was ordered to get to sea as quickly as possible<sup>4</sup>.

Norris's force was however still incomplete. When he received this letter on the 7th he had 14 ships at Spithead, the 'Dreadnought' and

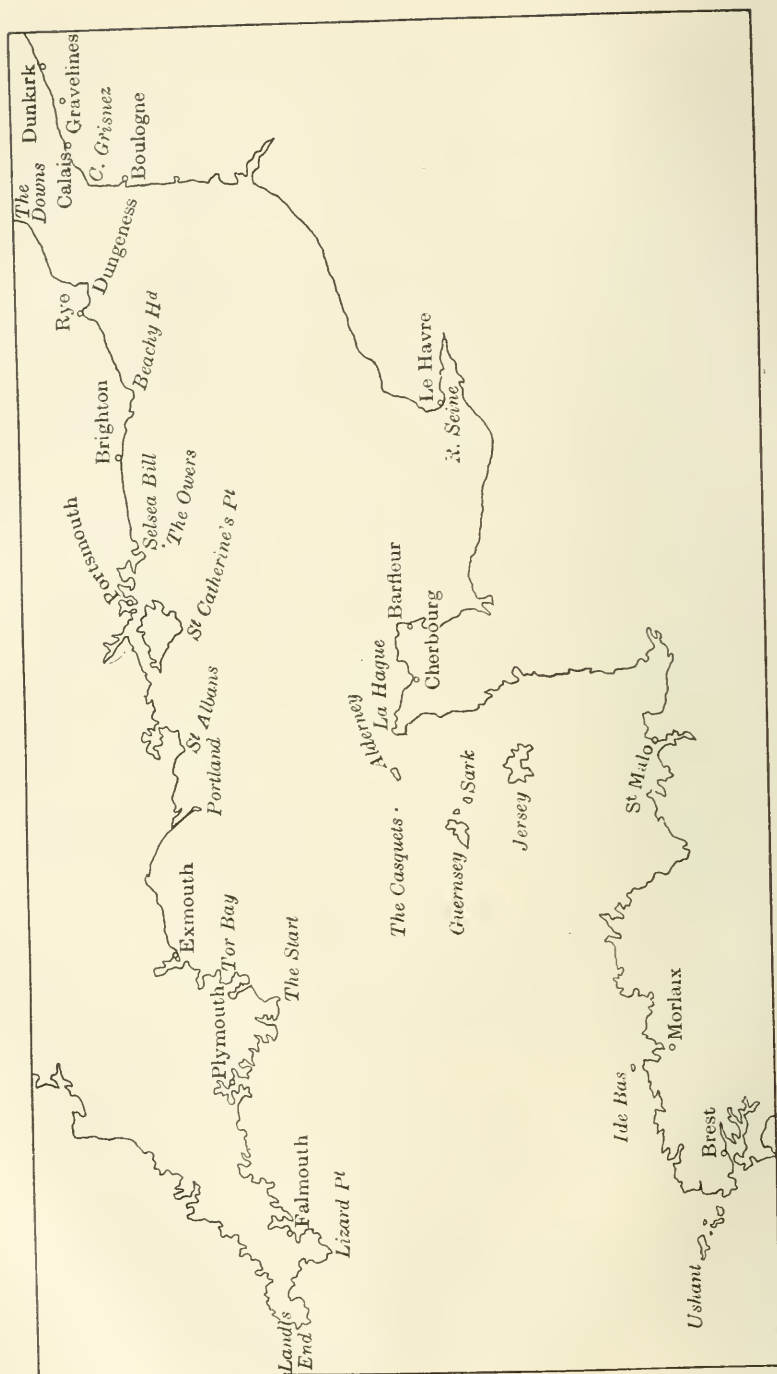
<sup>1</sup> Eleven were of the line and one a 50-gun ship.

<sup>2</sup> 'St George,' 90, 'Jersey,' 60, 'Roebuck,' 40.

<sup>3</sup> The total number of ships in home waters in commission on February 1st, 1744, was twenty-three of the line (including 50's) and five 44-gun ships, of which four of the former and three of the latter were fitting or refitting. The total force immediately available was, therefore, nineteen of the line and two 44-gun frigates.

<sup>4</sup> Duke of Newcastle to Norris, February 6th, 1744.





THE ENGLISH CHANNEL

'Princess Royal' having just arrived from the eastward. When the remainder joined him he would have 19, "a force I believe sufficient for the Brest squadron now at sea according to the account we have received of it," but he added that the latest intelligence stated that the French were to be reinforced from L'Orient and Rochefort<sup>1</sup>. The Duke of Newcastle was at the same time writing directing him to sail with the 16<sup>2</sup> ships he had, as they were of such great force that they would be sufficient to encounter the Brest squadron. Norris received this letter on Feb. 8th at 11 A.M. He then had been joined by two more ships<sup>3</sup> so that he now had 16 large ships at Spithead and the three previously mentioned in Portsmouth harbour. He replied that so soon as the latter could be got out of harbour he would sail.

On the 9th February there was still no further news of the Brest squadron itself but some information as to its reported intentions was received. At 3 P.M. on February 7th a smuggler—one Michael Howland of Deal—who had run over from Calais, informed the collector of Customs at Deal that twenty French men of war were expected daily at Calais from Brest; that ten Dunkirk pilots were there awaiting their arrival; that seamen from Boulogne and Calais were being brought into Dunkirk; and that a 50-gun ship had arrived in Calais Road. From another source came the news that an embargo had been laid on all the shipping in Dunkirk, where about fifty vessels of from 150 to 200 tons were said to be collected.

The uneasiness of the Government now became acute, and if we put ourselves in the position of the persons responsible for the safety of the kingdom and the outlying detachments of the national forces we can understand their anxiety. A large fleet had sailed from Brest and had been seen standing into the Channel. Frigates had been out in search of it but no further news whatever of its movements had been received for a full eleven days. The information as to its object was contradictory. One report indicated that the fleet was to cruise and cut Mathews's communications; as reinforcements and a large fleet of victualling ships were about to sail for the Mediterranean this appeared not improbable. The other report stated it was going direct to the Mediterranean to join the squadrons there, and then, with a conjunct fleet of about 50 sail, attack Mathews, who would barely be able to muster 30. From its having been so long at sea without being sighted by the cruisers the probability seemed to be that it did not intend to come up Channel,

<sup>1</sup> Norris to Duke of Newcastle, February 7th, 1744.

<sup>2</sup> This includes the ships in Portsmouth harbour.

<sup>3</sup> 'Princess Amelia' from Devonport, and 'Kinsale' which had sighted the French on her way with a convoy to the West Indies and been chased by them. The 'Kinsale' left the convoy and brought the news to Portsmouth.



though the embargo reported at Dunkirk on Feb. 7th might well be connected with some military action. The embargo alone might mean no more than a precautionary measure in anticipation of war; it was the almost invariable practice to detain all shipping before the outbreak of hostilities, since two important objects were served by such an action; the enemy's vessels and seamen, the latter in particular, most important to him, were seized and could not serve him, and the crews of the national ships were prevented from leaving the ports and were thereby available to serve in the navy.

One thing only appeared certain—that France was taking some serious step, which was aimed at England. So far as could be seen the blow now seemed to have the British Mediterranean fleet as its objective—either directly or indirectly. That fleet for two years had been a standing insult to France, and it was not improbable that an attack upon it would be the first act of hostility.

On Feb. 9th a report reached London that four more large ships had sailed from Brest on Feb. 4th. In writing this to Norris on the 9th the Duke told him that as no news had been received of the French since Jan. 29th the French squadron had, he considered, gone back, and was now on its way to Toulon. A most confused order from the Committee of Council followed. Norris was to put to sea at once and get intelligence of the enemy. So soon as he had intelligence he was to detach Admiral Martin with as many ships as he could spare in chase, keeping a few ships for the security of the Channel. Martin was to look into Brest, and if the French were not there, to proceed with all despatch and join Mathews, taking with him the victualling and store ships now lying at Spithead awaiting convoy to the Mediterranean. If the French put into Cadiz, Martin was to go to Gibraltar and watch them. But if the French were found to be in Brest Martin was to return for orders.

A more ill-conceived set of instructions it is difficult to imagine. Norris was to procure intelligence of the enemy: but if he should get none, he was to detach Martin, as the Duke had made up his mind the French were gone to the Mediterranean. If, when Martin looked into Brest he found no ships there, he was to take a portion of the squadron and follow them. The whole Channel Squadron, as we have seen, consisted of 19 ships. The French were reported to have sailed from Brest with 21 sail and to have been joined since by 4 more. Norris was however not to send the whole 19 in pursuit, but only as many as could be spared when a sufficiency had been retained for the security of the Channel. But it is clear that if the French had gone to the Mediterranean, no danger existed in the Channel, except as regards trade: and an occasion such as this was not one in which to consider trade. The fate of

the Mediterranean squadron hung in the balance, and depending on the Mediterranean squadron were the fortunes of our allies in Italy, and even more so the security of the United Kingdom. To divide the squadron and send a weak detachment in pursuit of the Brest squadron was to court defeat.

Ordering Norris to sea to get intelligence of the French was in itself a questionable proceeding: he could get little if any more news at sea than he could at a base into which all reports both from France and from the frigates which he already had cruising would naturally and quickly flow. To detach Martin on such flimsy evidence as the absence of the French from Brest would have been madness. Further, if the French had sailed to the Mediterranean it would be essential to pursue them with the utmost speed. Yet Martin was to be ordered to take out under his escort a great fleet of victuallers and store ships, the presence of which with a squadron notoriously reduced its mobility. In the end of his letter the Duke shewed that he felt that the movements of the Brest squadron might be connected with the preparation reported making at Dunkirk. "His Majesty doubts not," he wrote, "that you will have had some small ships to keep such a look out that it will be impossible for the squadron to pass without your knowledge."

Norris, who received this letter on the 10th, was about to sail in accordance with the urgent orders of the 8th, having got the three ships in harbour out to Spithead. He viewed these instructions as to dividing his force with great distrust. "I apprehend," he replied, on Feb. 10th, "that it will be very difficult for me to procure any intelligence at sea certain enough to determine a resolution of such infinite consequence as the dividing the ships I have with me," and he asked that, as the earliest information of the French would probably be received by the Duke, he would transmit it without delay. On the next evening (Feb. 11th) news was received. The Custom House boat from Dartmouth, commanded by one Walter Jones, came into harbour and reported having seen 16 French men-of-war lying three leagues S.S.E. from the Start. Jones had run within half-a-mile of them and had been chased. Escaping, he hastened to Portsmouth and arriving there next day gave his news to Norris.

The Admiral now had a fairly comprehensive set of reports from which to deduce the probable intentions of the enemy. On the 6th February the French had been seen by, and had chased, the 'Kinsale' and 'Biddeford' in the chops of the Channel; an isolated French ship had been seen off the Lizard on the 8th; and now Jones had seen them on the 10th off the Start. Since easterly winds had been blowing throughout this time, with the exception of one or two days, it was

clear that the report that the enemy were going to the Mediterranean was incorrect. They might be cruising in the Soundings to capture trade, or they might be coming up Channel for some reason unknown, but connected in all probability with the embargo and the gathering of ships at Dunkirk. So far, however, they were still to the westward, for if they had come up Channel since being seen the day before they would certainly have been reported by Norris's cruising ships which were stationed off the Isle of Wight, Cape Barfleur and Alderney; it was impossible that a large fleet, beating up Channel, could have passed without being seen by some of these cruisers. Dunkirk, in Norris's opinion, was their destination; and he could not forbear reminding the Duke that he had advised him earlier to keep an eye in that direction: "I was apprehensive," he wrote, "you would not be long without an alarm from that quarter, and I am sure your Grace will do me the justice to remember I have formerly represented the consequence of leaving that port unguarded."

While Norris was thus easy in his mind that the Brest squadron could not pass up Channel without fighting him, the Duke of Newcastle received a report that indicated to him that it had actually done so. On Feb. 11th—the day Norris sent his information derived from Jones—one Bryan Pybus wrote to the Duke from Dover to tell him that the mate of the Dover Packet had arrived the evening before from Calais, with the news that on the 9th and 10th, twenty-three sail of large ships had passed Calais on their way to Dunkirk, some of which were believed to be men-of-war; and that more ships were expected. From Boulogne came more news, dated Feb. 10th, to the same effect but even more explicit, namely that seven sail of French men-of-war of from 50 to 70 guns had passed Cape Grisnez at 10 A.M. on the 9th and three more on the evening of the same day. Besides this an extraordinary number of boats was assembled at Dunkirk, 8000 foot and 1000 horse had arrived there and another seven battalions were at Calais.

At 3 A.M. on the morning of the 12th a new piece of information was added which had been received from the Customs officer at Deal, dated Feb. 11th, 9 A.M. This was to the effect that seventeen sail of French men-of-war were at that time at the back of the Goodwins, steering for Dunkirk; and these had been seen again on the morning of the 11th by Mr Bazeley, a Dover pilot. This news the Duke immediately sent to Norris by express with the remark that it "puts it out of doubt the whole Brest squadron is actually come up Channel" and Norris was ordered to sail at once and attack it. The report, together with that of the preceding day, was laid before the Committee of the Council on the morning of the 12th. The march of all regiments on

London was ordered; the officers belonging to the forts at Tilbury and Sheerness were directed to hasten to their posts; marines were to be put into the garrisons; a complete battalion of Guards was to be kept ready at the Tower of London; troops were to be sent from Ireland; General Cope was ordered to Scotland; the militia of London, Westminster and Tower Hamlets were to be called out; Trinity House was directed to take up all the buoys at the Nore, and, later, to blind the lights at the North Foreland, Orfordness, and Harwich if the French appeared<sup>1</sup>, "the preparations making in the Port of Dunkirk rendering it probable that an invasion is intended to be made on some part of his Majesty's dominions." This is the first date at which it appears that any serious apprehensions of invasion were entertained.

Norris received his orders to sail with misgiving, for he could not believe the Brest squadron had passed up Channel. The wind was yet light, and the 13th Feb. found him still at St Helens, where some new information came into his hands. Lewis Sabiren, a midshipman of the 'Princess Amelia' who was rejoining his ship in a sloop from Plymouth, arrived at Spithead and told Norris that on the 11th they had passed nineteen French men-of-war four leagues off Portland standing to the southward on a W.S.W. wind. Here was intelligence in complete contradiction to that received from the eastward, but Norris had no doubt in his mind which was true and which false. "I have indeed never doubted one moment," he said, in transmitting this news to the Duke, "that the Brest squadron was to the westward of us and that the ships that have appeared at the back of the Goodwin sands was a different squadron composed of much smaller ships. Had I been believed," he added bitterly, "in what I represented last Spring when the King was going abroad, we had been now in a condition to drive the Brest ships out of the Channel and at the same time been covered from any insult or attempt from Dunkirk: but I was treated then as an old man that dreamed dreams. I pray God I may not live to see them come to pass." How greatly he doubted the wisdom of leaving the excellent position in which he lay is shewn in the concluding paragraph of his letter. "Having his Majesty's positive order to sail immediately to the Downs I shall lose no time in proceeding thither: but if the unquestionable advices you will have now received of the station of the Brest ships make any alterations in his Majesty's pleasure, your Grace will despatch a messenger to me with it, who will probably find me here as the wind

<sup>1</sup> *S.P. Dom. Various V*, for decision of Committee. Also Minutes of the Privy Council. B.M. Add. MS. 33004. The Committee sat in the forenoon; the Privy Council at 7 P.M. confirmed the decisions of the Committee except the calling out of the militia.



is easterly." The Duke however preferred to trust his own judgment, based on the evidence of the Custom House officers and pilots, to that of the experienced Commander-in-Chief, based on an appreciation of the situation and on well-grounded reports; and he replied next day that the intelligence in relation to the preparations making by France was of such a nature that Norris was to repair to the Downs with the fleet with the utmost expedition. Norris sailed on receipt of the letter, and anchored in the Downs on Feb. 17th<sup>1</sup>, reporting his arrival as quickly as possible to London.

The Council, knowing from letters of the 7th, which were confirmed by others of later date, that there were transports at Dunkirk, decided to send orders to attack them at once. Ministers met in the forenoon of the 18th and drew up instructions for Norris to take the whole fleet over to Dunkirk and destroy this shipping<sup>2</sup>, but the order had not been despatched by the evening when a letter from Norris was received containing fresh information upon receipt of which the above instructions were cancelled. A new letter was sent to the Commander-in-Chief. The information which induced this change was that eighteen sail of French men-of-war had been seen at 6.30 A.M. on the 17th off Portland by James Young of the 'Peggy.' A 24-gun ship had run down and hailed him, asking how many men-of-war there were at Spithead—he was hailed in English, but the men, said Young, were French—and when he left them at noon the squadron was rather more than seven leagues to the S.S.W. of the Needles. The new order ran as follows: "His Majesty in these circumstances does not think proper to send you any particular order, having a most perfect dependence on your skill, ability and zeal." The "perfect dependence" was however qualified, for in the same letter Norris was told to dispose his squadron "in such a manner as to be able to fall on the French fleet and also to prevent or destroy the embarkations designed from Dunkirk: and as these are the two objects,

<sup>1</sup> The fleet under Norris in the Downs on that day consisted of the following ships:

'Victory' ... 100	'Prin. Amelia' 80	'Prin. Mary' 60	'Kinsale' ... 40
'Duke' ... 90	'Shrewsbury' 80	'Medway' ... 60	'Anglesea' ... 40
'Sandwich' 90	'Cornwall' ... 80	'Worcester' 60	'Dolphin' ... 20
'St George' 90	'Pr. Frederick' 70	'Jersey' ... 60	'Gibraltar' ... 20
'Prin. Royal' 90	'Captain' ... 70	'Dreadnought' 60	'Aetna' }
	'Northumber-	'Augusta' ... 60	'Scipio' } Fireships
	land' ... 70	'Deptford' ... 60	'Terror' } Bomb-
	'Suffolk' ... 70	'Preston' ... 50	'Lightning' } vessels

Making nineteen of the line and one 50-gun ship. The 'Monmouth' 70, and 'Sutherland' 50, were at Plymouth and expected to join soon. The 'Phoenix' 24, and 'Fly' sloop, joined on the 18th.

<sup>2</sup> It is strange that no seaman was present at this meeting, not even the First Lord of the Admiralty himself.

his Majesty doubts not you will take the best and the most proper measures for that purpose."

On receipt of this letter on the 19th Norris held a council of war of the four Admirals to discuss it. The Commander-in-Chief, it will be seen, was ordered to do two things—fall on the French fleet and destroy the embarkations at Dunkirk. The Council of Admirals recorded that "it is our unanimous opinion that this squadron is not of sufficient force to prevent the embarkation from Dunkirk, and at the same time to fall upon the fleet in the Channel with a prospect of success, but that we are ready to proceed on either of these services as his Majesty shall be pleased to direct." A letter to this effect was sent to London.

This decision may seem to modern eyes to shew too great a dependence on orders on the part of the Commander-in-Chief, and a disposition to throw the responsibility of final decision on other shoulders than his own, when he might in his own person settle the question. But it is to be borne in mind that the Admiral had been distinctly commanded that he was to follow such orders as should be sent him by one of his Majesty's principal secretaries of State. The authority of the King from whom the orders emanated was absolute, and could not be lightly disregarded. When therefore an order such as that of the 18th reached the Admiral, he felt that he could not do otherwise than point out the impossibility of executing it as it stood, and ask which of the two duties he should perform.

On the afternoon of Feb. 18th Norris sent the 'Gibraltar' 20, 'Fly' sloop and a cutter over to Dunkirk under Captain Durell to reconnoitre and report the actual state of affairs in the Road. Durell returned about noon on the 20th having found four 60-gun ships lying off Dunkirk, one with a white flag at the mizen topmast head, and a number of smaller vessels. He had not been able to get information as to the latter as the large ships prepared to chase him and he had to make off. No reply had yet been received from the Government, and Norris wrote again, asking whether he might take the first opportunity of wind and weather—it was now blowing a whole gale and the squadron was lying with yards and topmasts down—and endeavour to destroy the transports. "If we remain here," he wrote, "without attempting anything we leave the French at liberty to do what they choose in the Channel; and perhaps an invasion may be carried on from la Hougue as was intended before my lord Orford's battle there. We are too weak to divide our ships; nor, in my poor opinion, can the Nation be defended but by our despatching one of these affairs immediately."

Norris's request for instructions was received on the 20th and

debated by the Council<sup>1</sup>. The reply sent was to "proceed with your fleet off Dunkirk and endeavour to destroy all the transports that are assembled there, and any men-of-war and other French ships that you shall find there, and afterwards that you shall look out for, and fight, the Brest squadron." This order reached Norris on the 21st. A storm was blowing, and it was impossible to carry a great fleet among the shoals of Dunkirk. The favourable opportunity had passed.

Next day, February 22nd, the French main body was seen at 10 A.M. off Brighton, fifteen or eighteen sail in number, standing up Channel. Another seven sail—five of the line and two frigates—were reported to be in Dunkirk Road where 20,000 troops and 59 sail of transports were said to be collected, the troops in process of embarking but delayed in doing so by the strong gale that was blowing. A rumour also reached the Admiral late in the evening that the main French squadron had arrived off Dungeness and anchored, but it would appear, from his later decision, that he did not consider the information sufficiently reliable to act upon it in face of the threat of the army embarking at Dunkirk. What was certain was that the enemy were somewhere near Brighton, possibly as far as Dungeness. He now had an important choice to make—to stay where he was and wait for the enemy, attempt to attack the transports in Dunkirk, or sail at once against the main French fleet. The decision he made will best be given in his own words: "As I think it of the greatest consequence to his Majesty's service to prevent the landing those troops in any part of our country I have upon a consultation with the flag-officers determined to anchor outside of the sands of Dunkirk where we shall be in the fairest way for keeping them in; but if they should unfortunately get out and pass us in the night and go northward I intend to detach a superior force to endeavour to overtake and destroy them and with the remainder of my squadron either fight the French fleet now in the Channel, or observe them and cover the country, as our circumstances will admit of: or I shall follow this embarkation with all my strength as his Majesty shall think most for his service."

With these objects Norris unmoored on the evening of the 22nd, but so strong a gale came on that he could not move from his anchors. All next day the gale persisted. On the evening of the 23rd he received confirmation of the report that the main body of the French was at Dungeness. Now it was no longer a question of being led away in search

<sup>1</sup> Present: Lord Chancellor, Lord Privy Seal, Lord Steward, Duke of Richmond, Duke of Montagu, Marquis of Tweeddale, Earl of Pembroke, Earl of Winchelsea, Lord Carteret, Mr Pelham and the Duke of Newcastle. (*S.P. Dom. Various V.*)

of an elusive enemy; Norris at last had certain knowledge of where the main squadron lay, and that it was within striking distance. In moving his squadron down to Dungeness with the wind in the N.W. he would run little risk of leaving the coast uncovered, and he decided at once to attack the main body. "As they are now so near me," he wrote early on the 24th, "I am getting under sail with the wind at N.W. to fall upon them; and hope to do it and be off of Dunkirk before any attempt can possibly be made from that place: but if I should not come up with them as soon as I expect I shall detach a sufficient force to prevent any embarkation from getting out of that port."



## CHAPTER IV

### THE FRENCH MOVEMENTS IN THE CHANNEL

THE French squadron within striking distance of which Norris now found himself was taking part in a long considered plan, the origin of which must be retraced from the early days of the war with Spain.

For some years before it broke out in 1739, negotiations between the Jacobite leaders and the Pretender had been in progress. When, in 1738, matters between England and Spain were coming to a crisis, the supporters of the Stuart cause saw in the situation an opportunity of obtaining the help they required to restore to the throne the King whom they acknowledged. Cardinal Fleury, while he listened to their representations and expressed a lively sympathy with their aim, with great suppleness avoided being drawn into any action to support it.

Throughout 1740 the Cardinal had continued to express the benevolence of his feelings, and to keep in touch with the Jacobite leaders. The outbreak of the continental war in the beginning of 1741, and the collisions between British and French vessels in West Indian and European waters, alike failed to alter his attitude. He was, as we have seen, prepared to assist to defend the Spanish possessions in the West Indies and to support the Spanish attack upon Italy; but in both of these he committed France no further than as an auxiliary to Spain. But before he died in 1743 the reins of power had passed into hands less wedded to peace. The rule of passive sympathy changed into one of active partisanship under his successor, Cardinal Tencin, whose Stuart sentiments were well known in England<sup>1</sup>. The whole question of a rising in favour of the Stuarts was now exhaustively examined by order of the French ministry, and all the factors upon which the success of an expedition would depend were gone into with minute care. The state of the feelings of the British people, the number and disposition of their troops, the probabilities of assistance in different parts of the country, the most suitable landing places both tactically and strategically were enquired into, and a lengthy memorandum was prepared in which the outlines and most practicable methods of an invasion were discussed<sup>2</sup>. The total number of troops in the United Kingdom in

<sup>1</sup> E.g. "To-day it is confirmed that Cardinal Tencin and M. d'Argenson are declared of the Prime Ministry. The first moment they can Tencin will be for transporting the Pretenders into England." H. Walpole to H. Mann, August 28th, 1742, written when the news that Tencin had joined the Ministry.

<sup>2</sup> A portion of this memorandum is reproduced at length on pp. 19 to 28 of *Louis XV et les Jacobites*. J. Colin.

June 1743 was estimated at not more than 16,000 men, and these so scattered in the several commands about the country that it would take six weeks to assemble a force of 5000 men, unless the garrison of London should be used—a step which the Government were not expected to venture on taking. Based on this estimate, it was suggested that an expeditionary force of 10,000 men would be sufficient. Maldon, in Essex, was proposed as the landing place<sup>1</sup>, as reinforcements could easily join there; and as its distance from London was but a bare two marches, there would be no time for English troops to oppose the advance on the Capital. The invading force, moreover, being interposed between the troops about London and those coming from the northward, would be able to prevent them from effecting a junction. To hold London would, in the opinion of the memorialist, be to hold England.

If so large a force as 10,000 men could not be spared or transported, the best place for disembarking a smaller force, such as 5000 men, would be near Weymouth, as the people in the Western Counties who were reported as discontented were the most likely to join hands with the invaders.

This memorandum, which was delivered in October 1743, was followed by a detailed account of the disposition of the troops in England and Scotland. According to this there was a total of 10,683 men of the regular troops in garrisons about the country, 4000 marines in quarters ashore and 4530 men in Scotland, making 19,213 altogether of whom 3515 were the guards who would be tied to London<sup>2</sup>.

The plan drawn up on this information was one in which surprise played an important part. The success of the expedition would depend upon finding the Navy unready to oppose the crossing of the water, the troops scattered and incapable of offering resistance, and the Government unprepared to deal with the political situation created. Dunkirk was decided on as the port of embarkation. The fortifications of this sea port had been demolished in accordance with the terms of the treaty of Utrecht, but restoration had been in hand for some time (with which Great Britain had refrained from interfering, by protest or otherwise,

<sup>1</sup> The place ultimately selected was Blackwall, being nearer London, and offering a better chance of a rising in the Capital.

<sup>2</sup> The letter gives the following stationing of some of the troops, shewing how scattered they were:

Bristol	... 815	Leeds	... 215	Worcester	... 215
Gloucester	... 215	Wolverhampton	... 215	Birmingham and	} 815
Newcastle and	} ... 815	Exeter	... 815	Shrewsbury	
Berwick		Salisbury,	} 815	Reading, New-	} 815
		Shaftesbury		bury and Hen-	
		and Blandford		ley	

for fear of arousing French hostility), and the troops could be quartered in that vicinity without exciting suspicion. Marshal de Saxe, the most brilliant General of France in the Army in the Netherlands, was chosen to command the expedition, which was to consist of 334 officers and 9695 men.

Transport was hired to the amount of 7755 tons, but about 1200 of the troops were to be carried in the escorting men-of-war; thus allowance was made at the rate of rather under one ton per man. The merchant vessels intended for the purpose were taken up in the ports of Rochefort, Nantes, St Malo, Dieppe and Havre. In pursuance of the essential policy of secrecy, some were chartered for a voyage to America and others for Holland. No information as to the service on which they were to be employed was given even to the local officers on whom the duty of hiring them devolved. The object of surprise was furthered by the fact that the necessary troops being already in the Netherlands and about to go into winter quarters, there would be nothing extraordinary that they should do so in the country near Dunkirk; and the season chosen for the attempt was that at which the British ships in home waters were laid up at their ports.

The orders to prepare the men-of-war and transports were dated Nov.  $\frac{4}{15}$ . As the preparation of ships of the line would excite suspicion in England it had first been suggested that the expedition should be carried out without the assistance of the main fleet, the transports being only covered by a few frigates which would suffice to drive off any small craft; but this method was presumably considered to involve too great a risk. Consequently the eventual arrangement was that the transports should be escorted by a division of the fleet, the main body of which would be used to oppose the movements of, or if possible destroy, the principal division of the British fleet, which would be lying at Portsmouth or Spithead.

The officers appointed to command the main body and the escort respectively were the Comte de Roquefeuil, a veteran of the old wars who had seen 62 years of service<sup>1</sup>, and M. de Barailh whose entry in the French Navy dated from 1689. The latter received his first instructions on November  $\frac{6}{17}$ . These were to the effect that his squadron was to be ready to sail from Brest at the end of December, victualled to six months—a provision made to give the impression that they were intended for service abroad. No other information was given to him, nor was the Commander-in-Chief told any more than that ships at Brest were to be got ready, and that some—those under de Barailh—would be detached on a particular service and their places filled by

<sup>1</sup> Lacour-Gayet, *La Marine Militaire sous Louis XV.*

others from Rochefort. He was told that the 29 Dec./9 Jan. was the latest date at which he must be prepared to sail and that he was to make the utmost endeavours to have his squadron ready by that time<sup>1</sup>.

The expedition was thus intended to start early in January; but political considerations intervened. The Jacobite leaders were anxious to delay its departure until the end of the month. A proposal to retain Hanoverian troops in British pay would then be before Parliament, and as this measure was a most unpopular one it was anticipated that the moment would be favourable for interposition in favour of the old Dynasty. While in an enterprise of this nature it is essential to keep a finger constantly on the national pulse and make every use of popular feeling, it is to be doubted whether the French Ministry shewed wisdom in subordinating the purely military element to a factor so proverbially uncertain as the manner in which the populace would receive a certain measure in Parliament. Their doing so argued that the mass of the people took a greater interest in parliamentary debates than was really the case. There was, in fact, very little disloyalty in the south, and the addition of such persons as were discontented would have been a matter of small immediate military importance. On the other hand it was certain that the longer the expedition was delayed the more likely was the news to cross the Channel, and the more time would the British Government have to prepare to resist the attempt.

All calculations for and against delay were however upset by the unexpected arrival in France of Charles Edward Stuart. This impetuous prince, as we have already seen, suddenly left Rome, landed at Antibes, and thence departed for Paris on Jan.  $\frac{18}{29}$ . As late as the day before he left Antibes the Jacobite leaders felt sure that no inkling of what was afoot had entered the heads of the British Ministry. Lord Sempill, writing on the 28th, had said "The infatuation of the Government appears extraordinary: the Ministers laugh at the preparations which are being made at Brest and Toulon<sup>2</sup>." But Prince Charles's action could not fail to arouse the attention of the most "infatuated" of Ministers, and it was with dismay that the French Government heard of his arrival at Antibes, realising that their hopes of secrecy must soon be at an end; the only chance of success lay in immediate action. A covering letter was therefore sent on Jan. 21/Feb. 1 ordering de Roquefeuil to sail as soon as he possibly could with all the ships he had ready, without waiting for those from

<sup>1</sup> There were at Brest in January, 1744, seven second-rates, eleven third-rates, four fourth-rates (over 40 guns), five frigates and ten small craft. Colin, *Louis XV*, etc., p. 48.

<sup>2</sup> Lord Sempill to M. Amelot, 28th January (N.S.). He is quoting a report from Macgregor of Balhaldie. Colin, *Louis XV*, etc., p. 55.



Rochefort if they had not yet joined. He was to open his secret orders when he got off Ushant. So far the French Commander-in-Chief knew no more than the man in the street of the operations in which he was about to take part. The military Commander, Marshal Saxe, received however his full instructions, informing him of the intention to invade England and giving him an outline of the manner in which the operations were to be executed<sup>1</sup>.

The endeavour wholly to conceal the preparations had, as we have seen, proved fruitless; but secrecy as to the object had been well maintained. The preservation of this secrecy was abetted by the long period during which the French squadron was lost. The reasons for the delay which added so greatly to the perplexities of the British ministry, lay in the vicissitudes through which the squadron passed after leaving Brest.

When Norris weighed from the Downs to attack the long sought for enemy, the French squadron had been a month at sea. Sailing on January 26th, M. de Roquefeuil opened his sealed instructions, as he had been ordered, off Ushant. They told him little; owing to the great anxiety of the French Ministry lest their intentions should become known all information as to the real object of his mission was still withheld. After reciting the injuries which France had suffered at the hands of England since the war with Spain had been in progress, the document stated that "his Majesty has resolved, without declaring war on England<sup>2</sup>, to exercise general reprisals" and to seize and take all ships of war, vessels, goods and effects belonging to the King of Great Britain and his subjects, for which purpose letters of marque and reprisal would be sent to him. The instructions continued: "His Majesty, deeming it desirable to explain his intentions as to how he [the Admiral] should conduct himself, desires that without further orders he should, on leaving Brest, proceed into the Channel with all the ships and frigates under his command, and that he should not only seize and take the fleets and convoys of English merchant ships which he may meet, but also that he should seek engage and endeavour to capture the squadrons of English men-of-war which he shall meet with in the course of his cruising."

"In order that M. de Roquefeuil may be able to judge as to what he can undertake against the naval forces of England, his Majesty sends

<sup>1</sup> For Saxe's instructions see Appendix V.

<sup>2</sup> Guérin (*Histoire Maritime de la France*), in speaking of the outbreak of this war, alludes indignantly to the shame which must always attach to England for her habit of beginning war without a declaration; and states that France after making a proper declaration proceeded to conduct an attempt to invade (pp. 341-342). It is to be feared that England's "shame" must be shared by France.

him herewith a list of all the English men of war that are actually fit for the sea or being made ready. He will see by this list that there are now only nine or ten at Spithead, and that the remainder are dispersed at the different ports: he should recognise that the majority of these ships are not completely fitted. In these circumstances, his Majesty considers that M. de Roquefeuil, after entering the Channel, should continue on his course until he is abreast the Isle of Wight, in order to draw out the ships that are at Spithead, and that he should begin the operations committed to his care by attacking and destroying this squadron of ships."

With the performance of these duties in view, Roquefeuil began to beat up Channel; but owing to foul winds and indifferent seamanship, he made little progress. Notwithstanding the French system of manning and the time devoted to the preparation of the squadron, enough good seamen had not been procured to provide efficient crews. Saxe, in writing to the Minister of Marine, spoke thus of the personnel: "J'ai parlé à des officiers de l'escadre de M. de Barailh. Elle est pitoyablement équipée. Les matelots qui la composent sont plus propres à conduire une charrette qu'à naviguer<sup>1</sup>." Losses soon resulted. The 'Elizabeth' collided with the 'Juste' before getting clear of the anchorage, and when once at sea damages aloft reduced the squadron. The 'Médée' returned to Brest disabled on 31st Jan., on Feb. 7th the 'Triton' lost her mainmast and put back to harbour, and next day two others, the 'St Michel' and 'Dryade' followed her. It was not until Feb. 11th that the squadron got sight of the west end of the Isle of Wight, and when a fresh S.W. gale which would have taken him up Channel came on, de Roquefeuil, needing sea room, worked back again as far to the westward as the Lizard, where he arrived on Feb. 13th and was joined by the 'Rubis' which brought him his final instructions, dated Jan. 30/Feb. 10.

From these instructions de Roquefeuil learned for the first time the real object of his squadron. He was at last told of the intended invasion from Dunkirk and the part he was to play. "The most certain method to secure success in the said enterprise," so they ran, "would be to fight and crush the squadron of English ships which is at Spithead, and his Majesty has no doubts that in consequence of the orders he has already given to Comte de Roquefeuil he will do all he can to endeavour to draw that squadron to him in order to fight it; but if it does not dare to leave Spithead in face of the vessels of the King, it is his Majesty's intention that M. de Roquefeuil shall remain ready to fall on that squadron when it is able to come out, or even to take away its means

<sup>1</sup> J. Colin, *op. cit.*

of doing so by attacking the ships of which it is composed in the roads of St Helens, if they should moor in that anchorage.

"When the weather will not admit of his remaining in that part, his Majesty desires that he shall cruise constantly, as much as he is able, between the Isle of Wight and the Straits of Calais, as well to prevent the junction of all the English ships which are dispersed in the different ports of England, as to facilitate the passage of the convoy which is ordered to sail from Dunkirk to carry his Majesty's troops into the river of London."

The instructions continued by directing de Roquefeuil to detach de Barailh to Dunkirk with four ships and a frigate to cover the crossing of the transports. It was calculated that when this detachment was made there would still be 17 ships or frigates with the Commander-in-Chief which would be able to oppose the inferior Spithead squadron. Should he however find himself in inferior force to the English, de Roquefeuil was directed "to take such measures as he shall deem necessary in order to avoid a too unequal combat;...but in any case so to act as absolutely to prevent the Spithead squadron from getting to Dunkirk to oppose the passage of the convoy of the King's troops into England; and if notwithstanding all the manoeuvres he may execute to detain the said squadron in the Channel it should succeed in reaching the Straits of Calais, his Majesty wishes that he shall follow it thither, in order to rejoin the ships detached under M. de Barailh and together escort the convoy to the Thames, fighting any English men of war it may meet on its way."

On receiving these instructions de Roquefeuil called his colleagues—de Barailh and de Camilly—on board and communicated the contents to them. The squadron was now off Plymouth and it was thought undesirable to make the detachment before they were past the danger area of Spithead. It was therefore agreed that de Barailh should remain in company until the squadron was to the eastward of the Isle of Wight. A cruiser, the '*Vénus*,' was to go on ahead and get pilots for Dunkirk, but until she rejoined with them, de Barailh could not safely part company, unless the weather permitted him to pick them up at Calais.

The passage of the convoy was the part which gave the Admiral most anxiety. Three large British ships were known to be in the Thames and these might be joined, without his knowing it, by more ships from Spithead. He therefore considered that de Barailh could not be too strong, and in acknowledging the receipt of his instructions he submitted for the Minister's consideration whether it would not be best to escort the transports with the whole of his force in any case; then if the landing were successful, to take his ships into the Thames where

they would be safer than cruising in a station so dangerous and so difficult to maintain as that to the eastward of Portsmouth<sup>1</sup>.

As we have seen, the first proposal had been to send the troops with an escort of a few frigates only. This being considered too dangerous, although the arming of a fleet might excite the suspicions of the English Government, it had been thought necessary to provide a greater measure of protection. Thus the escort was increased to four ships of the line. But this in turn was considered insufficient in view of the presence of three ships of force in the Thames which might, whatever precautions were taken, be reinforced by the main British fleet. So, finally, the proposal was made to escort the transports with the whole Brest squadron.

On receipt of de Roquefeuil's letter, the Minister ordered him (Feb. 20) to escort the convoy with his whole fleet so soon as he was sure that Norris was at Spithead. To de Barailh the whole thing seemed madness. The accidents that had already befallen the squadron, those which were certain to follow in so exposed a roadstead as Dunkirk, and the hazardous nature of the enterprise filled him with misgiving. "Dieu veuille," he wrote, "les favoriser d'une heureuse fin<sup>2</sup>."

De Roquefeuil continued to work up Channel with his whole force from the 13th to the 16th February. On the 16th, expecting to be up to the Isle of Wight next day, he sent off the 'Médée'—which had rejoined him—to reconnoitre St Helens' Road, and without awaiting her report he detached de Barailh to Dunkirk. Bad weather and some fog followed. On the 19th Feb. the frigate on rejoining the squadron to give her report, was dismasted and was unable to communicate her news. This was however of less importance than it might have been, for her Captain would only have given an incorrect report. He believed that he had seen eleven sail at St Helens and three at Spithead<sup>3</sup>; but as we know that Norris had sailed on the 14th, these ships of war were figments of the imagination of the Captain of the 'Médée,' and the episode must be classed with the case of bad scouting of the English frigates off Port Louis in 1740.

From another of his ships, however, de Roquefeuil received a correct

<sup>1</sup> Letter of de Roquefeuil of 16/27 February, 1744. Colin, *op. cit.*

<sup>2</sup> De Barailh to Maurepas, 15/26 February, 1744. Colin, *op. cit.*

<sup>3</sup> "The wind did not permit him (the commander of the 'Médée'), it is true, to go closer than a league, but the commander distinctly made out eleven ships, of which four were three-deckers, and the others of 60-guns and under, besides three ships which were moored on the Spithead side. M. de Roquefeuil could not be informed of this, the 'Médée' having been unable to rejoin him owing to the accident that happened." d'Argenson to de Saxe, 24th February/6th March, 1744. Colin, p. 127.



report that there were no ships at Spithead<sup>1</sup>; he concluded Norris must have withdrawn into Portsmouth harbour in order to avoid being attacked in an open roadstead. Unable therefore to deal any blow at the squadron, the French Admiral intended to cruise to the eastward of the Isle of Wight in order to cover the passage of the army, but finding the weather so bad that he was unable to maintain his station, he proceeded to Dungeness and anchored under its lee<sup>2</sup> about 8 P.M. on the 21st Feb.

De Barailh had parted company with four ships<sup>3</sup> at 2 P.M. on the 17th Feb. off the Isle of Wight; he proceeded to Calais, where he anchored at 11 A.M. next day, the 'Vénus,' which had been sent to fetch pilots, having only arrived an hour before him. On the 21st de Barailh arrived at Dunkirk, where the troops were awaiting his arrival before embarking on board the assembled transports, M. Bart had refused to run the risk of putting men on board until the vessels could be protected from seaward.

We have seen that the instructions to Marshal Saxe were dated Jan.  $\frac{20}{31}$ . As he was in Paris at the time it is presumable that he received them about that day; he had therefore but little time to prepare his plan of campaign. He appears to have studied de Ruyter's descent in the Thames, but his whole scheme has not been preserved; he seems to have desired to seize Dover and Chatham for his points d'appui<sup>4</sup>. He left Paris and arrived at Calais on the 13th February to hasten the embarkation. "There is not an instant to spare," d'Argenson had written to him on the 9th, "the arrival of the King's ships is daily expected at Dunkirk." Speed was now a matter of the most supreme importance, but still neither could the embarkation be made until de Barailh appeared, nor could the transports sail until the pilots from the Thames arrived. As the time passed and the escorting squadron did not come, anxiety increased daily. On the 21st Feb.—the day de Barailh reached Dunkirk—Saxe wrote expressing his uneasiness as to the opposition he might meet on the water: "We know," he said, "that they have six or seven men of war either at the Downs or in the river. We are similarly informed that they have also coast guard vessels, frigates and sloops in the Channel, and that if they were hard pressed they could very quickly fit out several ships that are at Chatham in what they call the Dock or Basin, and also take up merchant vessels of 40 to 50 guns of

<sup>1</sup> Letter in *S.P. Foreign, Savoy*.

<sup>2</sup> De Roquefeuil calls it "Point de Péré" (p. 93), which M. Colin, by a slip, interprets as "sans doute Berry Head" (p. 86). The writer of the letter in *S.P. Savoy* calls it "la pointe des Peerées qui est éloignée des Dunes que de quatre ligues."

<sup>3</sup> 'Juste,' 70, 'Triton,' 60, 'Parfaite,' 44, 'Argonaute,' 44.

<sup>4</sup> So much of his plan as exists is in Colin, *op. cit.*, p. 74.

which there is a large number between Gravesend and the Tower.... M. de Barailh has 4 ships only to oppose them." Besides this a rumour was about that Norris had arrived in the Downs. This report was current on the 21st; on the 23rd de Barailh wrote of it as a certainty. The Minister, M. d'Argenson, however scouted it as impossible on the 24th, on which day he wrote to Saxe, warning the General to be careful not to accept the numerous reports which reached him, as it was a known fact that the 'Médée' had seen Norris's squadron at Spithead on the 17th, and it could not have passed de Roquefeuil. Thus the 'Médée's' incorrect report bore fruit.

Believing that Norris was still safely shut up in Portsmouth, Saxe began the embarkation of the army on the 22nd and about 7000 troops were got on board by the 24th. On the morning of that day the French Admiral, still believing himself to the eastward of the English squadron, was making his preparations to carry his ships to the Thames, in accordance with his latest instructions which had just been received. He had despatched one frigate to Calais for Thames pilots, and he now sent a second—the 'Subtile'—to hasten their arrival. The 'Subtile' had hardly parted company more than half-an-hour when she signalled that she saw a fleet apparently coming from the Downs. In a short time the strangers were visible from the French squadron. At first they were believed to be a fleet of merchant vessels, an easy prey. But before long the French Admiral was undeceived, and he found himself, with a force of only 15 ships of which his own flagship, the 'Superbe,' was disabled with a broken mainyard, being approached by a superior squadron of at least 19 sail which was steadily working towards him with the tide in its favour.

The fleet sighted was that of Norris. He had weighed from the Downs at 5 A.M. with the wind at N.W. backing towards the westward. At Dover he found the wind nearly dead foul, a bitterly disappointing situation, accentuated by the certain news brought him at 11 A.M. by the 'Roebuck,' which, joining him from the westward, reported having seen the French at anchor under Dungeness. But through the forenoon he worked to windward and in the early afternoon he had the satisfaction of coming within sight of the French and finding them still at their anchors. The wind, which had been dying down throughout the afternoon had now fallen to a light breeze only, but as the ebb tide was still running it carried the squadron to the westward. Between three and four in the afternoon the tide ceased and then turned, and Norris, finding that he was losing ground, had perforce to come to an anchor at the tantalising distance of eight miles from his enemy.

Disappointing as the anchoring of the squadron must have been

to the crowd of spectators which had assembled on shore in the hope of witnessing a fleet action, the sight was a very welcome one to the French, to whom a chance of escape now appeared. A Council of war held on board the 'Superbe' decided to weigh directly the next ebb began, shewing no lights, and endeavour to steal away in the darkness. Soon after 9 o'clock the tide turned. It was then a flat calm. The French silently cut or weighed and making no sail drifted away upon the tide.

At midnight the weather changed. A N.E. breeze came up which rapidly freshened into a violent gale. Many of the British ships had to cut or were driven from their anchors, and daylight on the 25th found the fleet dispersed over many leagues of water, scudding down Channel before a full gale under close reefed canvas or bare poles. Not a mast of the enemy was in sight.

The gale lasted throughout the 26th. Towards the evening it moderated and Norris, giving up hopes of overhauling the enemy, endeavoured to collect his scattered and damaged ships with the object of returning with them to the Downs to guard the Straits against the invasionary army. He did not know when the French had broken away, and though he sent his small craft—of which he had but few—to seek for them along the coast of France, he got no news whatever as to their whereabouts. "If this storm had not prevented it," wrote the Admiral on the 26th, "the destruction of the French squadron had in all our opinions been unavoidable; it was however fortunate we endeavoured it, for had we stood over to the coast of Dunkirk or remained in the Downs all our pilots think the whole fleet would have been in imminent danger." A French writer who was on board one of the ships expressed a similar idea as to the chances of the Brest squadron in an engagement with Norris's superior force. Speaking of the events of the afternoon of the 24th he says "If the wind or the tide had continued, it is certain we should have '*mal passé notre temps*<sup>1</sup>.'" As it was the gale carried the squadron home. Scudding before it the French returned to Brest where they arrived by two's and three's during the next few days.

At Dunkirk, the gale worked havoc among the French transports. Several of the smaller vessels and fishing boats that were carrying men out to the ships in the Road were driven ashore, and six of the transports themselves were wrecked. Although but few lives were lost, the tents, arms, ammunition, stores and provisions, nearly all of which had been by then embarked, were rendered useless or lost.

<sup>1</sup> *S.P. Foreign, Savoy*. A letter from Brest describing the proceedings of the squadron under Roquefeuil.

The gale thus made postponement necessary, but there were other reasons which led the Ministry to contemplate abandoning the expedition. After d'Argenson's confident letter on the 24th they learned that Norris was "ready to leave Spithead," and Maurepas had written with no small asperity to de Roquefeuil, blaming him for not having attacked Norris at Spithead—the 'Médée's' report still misled him<sup>1</sup>. The expedition was now ordered not to sail until the Admiral was certain of its security, an order which amounted to one of indefinite delay. The damage done by the gale meant renewing and re-lading the ships, which would, Saxe expected, take at least a week. After further representations on the part of both the Marshal and the Admiral, the enterprise was suspended<sup>2</sup>. A second gale on the 29th wrecked three more transports, and finally, all the remainder returned for shelter into the harbour of Dunkirk; but until this was known in London intense anxiety prevailed and protective measures were being redoubled.

The Council now appears to have had misgivings as to its capacity to control the campaign. On Feb. 24th, when Norris's letter saying he intended to endeavour to destroy de Roquefeuil's fleet and return quickly off Dunkirk was received, a decision was made to leave the further operations to the Admiral. The attempt to direct the movements of the fleet from London had done sufficient harm; it is to be regretted that the fact that in such a situation the Commander-in-Chief requires freedom of action was not recognised sooner. It is said that Norris stipulated before he took command that he should be allowed to conduct the campaign without interference; but the transference of the command from London to the 'Victory' came too late for any good service to be done<sup>3</sup>.

On February 28th, when there was no longer any doubt that France intended war, the Privy Council decided to call on Holland for troops for the defence of England<sup>4</sup>. Mr Robert Kerr, the British Minister at the Hague, was directed to make application for troops by

<sup>1</sup> "Il est fâcheux que, faute de vous avoir donné avis des vaisseaux qui étaient mouillés à Saint-Hélène, vous n'avez point été les y attaquer, comme vous vous le proposiez. C'est une occasion manquée, et je souhaite fort que vous puissiez en retrouver une autre aussi favorable." An undeserved reproof! Comte de Maurepas to de Roquefeuil, March 6th (N.S). Colin, *op. cit.*, p. 130.

<sup>2</sup> Letters of d'Argenson and Maurepas of February 27th/March 8th. Colin, pp. 159-160.

<sup>3</sup> The authority for this is in a letter from a Jacobite correspondent, dated February 13th. "L'Amiral Norris n'a voulu prendre le commandement de la flotte qu'à la seule condition d'avoir carte blanche, qu'on lui a accordé, et par conséquent l'on peut compter qu'il attaquera les Français s'il croit pouvoir le faire avec avantage." The agents were so well informed that this may well be true. Colin, p. 113.

<sup>4</sup> Minutes of the Privy Council. Newcastle Papers.



virtue of the defensive leagues of March 3rd, 1678, and April 3rd, 1716, both of which had been confirmed by the treaty of 1728. The Dutch were asked for 6000 troops at once; transports for the regiments would be sent without delay to Willemstadt. The Dutch Government replied with promptitude. On March 3rd six battalions were ordered to Willemstadt, and British transports lying in the Thames to go and fetch them.

Another pressing service now engaged the attention of the Government. The victualling fleet destined for the Mediterranean was still lying at Spithead, where it had been detained when the news of the sailing of the Brest squadron was received. Mathews was only provisioned until April and it was therefore of urgent necessity that the new supplies should be despatched without any further delay. The Privy Council—who, as we have seen had absorbed the functions of the Admiralty—ordered Norris to be informed of the absolute necessity of despatching the victuallers to the Mediterranean, and forthwith to consider what number of ships he could send to escort them into the sea, taking into consideration the strength of the Brest squadron. He was to treat the matter as one of the utmost consequence and to reply without loss of time.

Eight ships of the largest classes were available. These<sup>1</sup> Norris detached under Sir Charles Hardy, together with two frigates. The heavy ships were to carry the victuallers clear of Brest, the frigates to take them on to Mathews. He emphasised the importance of sailing at once, as the Brest squadron was undoubtedly damaged and the sea would be open<sup>2</sup>. But in order to take all possible precaution he instructed Hardy to look into La Hogue on his way to Spithead for any French ships that might be there. The important operations connected with this victualling fleet were to absorb the attention of the Channel squadron throughout the summer.

At the same time Norris had to furnish escort for the Dutch troops. On March 7th he detached Captain Boscawen with a mixed squadron<sup>3</sup> upon this service. The remainder of the ships he kept in the Downs with the object of making use of the first fine weather to complete the work of the gale by destroying the transports off Dunkirk, using fire-ships, small frigates, sloops and all the boats of the squadron. Such stormy weather continued however that he was unable to execute his plan. The last danger to the kingdom disappeared on March 28th, when

<sup>1</sup> 'Victory' 100, 'Duke' 90, 'Sandwich' 90, 'St George' 90, 'Princess Royal' 90, 'Cornwall' 80, 'Shrewsbury' 80 and 'Princess Amelia' 80. Also two heavy frigates, 'Preston' and 'Roebuck.'

<sup>2</sup> Norris to Duke of Newcastle, March 4th, 1744.

<sup>3</sup> 'Dreadnought,' 'Jersey,' 'Saphire,' 'Dover' and 'Harwich.'

de Barailh, with the four remaining ships, slipped away from Dunkirk on an easterly wind. Norris then felt that there was no longer any need for him to remain in the Downs, and he requested permission to come ashore. The Duke of Newcastle asked him to remain afloat, as war with France was now certain, but the Admiral had had enough of the methods of the Administration, and repeated his request. "I shall wait with the greatest impatience," he wrote, "for the resolution his Majesty shall be pleased to make upon the request I have made to him, being convinced in my conscience that my obtaining it is as necessary for his Majesty's service under the present management of the Admiralty, as for my own reputation and safety."

While Norris entered this protest against the Admiralty—a protest referring to the general conduct of affairs and the unreadiness of the fleet rather than to the recent operations—the Board were complaining of the interference of the Privy Council, and of their action in placing all the ships in home waters under Norris and taking all power out of the hands of the Lords Commissioners. Their letter, signed by the whole Board, gives an insight into the Administration of the day. It ran as follows:

"The difficulties and impediments we daily meet with in the execution of our office from your Majesty's late order to put all your ships whatever which are now at home or which shall return home under the command of Sir John Norris are so great and so destructive to your service that we think it our indispensable duty humbly to inform your Majesty thereof.

"The abridging the functions of your High Admiral committed to our care and transferring it over to a subordinate flag officer is not only a thing new and unheard of before, but your Majesty's service at home falling thereby under a mixed government wherein neither knows what the other does the natural consequence is throwing the whole management of sea affairs at home into disorder and confusion.

"For though Sir John Norris seems to continue in some sense under our orders, yet being invested with the general command of all your Majesty's ships whatever which are now at home or shall return home, we find ourselves disabled from sending orders to any ships at home though on never so necessary services and though they be in never so remote a port from the place where Sir John Norris is stationed, nor even (so far as we know) destined by him to be any part of his proper squadron in the service committed to his immediate care, unless we apply to that Admiral to give his orders to them.

"On the other hand it is impossible for Sir John Norris to execute the extraordinary power that is put into his hands, by reason of his not

having the whole plan of business before him, nor knowing the various applications daily made to us from all sorts of people who are interested in sea affairs. And thus by our not being able to act for want of power, nor the Admiral for want of knowledge and information, delays, mistakes and obstructions do every day happen to an almost total stagnation of business, and infinite prejudice to your Majesty's service, and of the Trade and Navigation of your subjects."

"It is the proper function and duty of a flag officer to be employed in the execution of some particular service. The preservation of your Majesty's kingdom from invasion is a service of the highest trust and to which all other considerations (as to the appointment of ships) ought to give place. But for a flag officer to have all the ships in England, or that shall come into England subjected to his command whether employed on the service under his direction or not, and to have all orders and directions pass through his hands relating to every other service whatsoever is a power greatly detrimental to your Majesty's service and which renders the office of High Admiral useless and insignificant."

WINCHELSEA.

BALTIMORE.

A. HAMILTON.

JOHN COKBURNE.

G. LEE.

JOHN PHILIPSON.

In reply to this letter the Privy Council reported to the King that the orders were "in the then critical and dangerous circumstances of affairs, highly proper and necessary for his Majesty's service and for the defence of the Kingdom, and in no way open to the above objection." No further action is recorded, but it is noticeable that in the next attempt at invasion the conduct of affairs was left to the Admiralty. Whether the orders that Norris should take his instructions from the Secretary of State instead of from the Admiralty, and that he should have all ships in home waters under his command, were in the long run prejudicial, depends upon whether the Admiralty would have kept their heads better than did the Council, and refrained from overriding the judgment of the Commander-in-Chief. Having regard to their conduct of sea affairs in the Mediterranean and in home waters during the preceding year, some doubt may be felt whether the Admiralty, on which Board one sea-officer only sat, would have done much better than the Privy Council. The justice however of the Admiralty's objections to Norris having under his orders all the ships in England, "whether employed in the service under his direction, or

not" is undoubted. The whole incident furnishes a valuable example of the need for clear definitions of the scope of responsibility of those who direct control and command.

The French attempt at invasion is deserving of consideration from the points of view of both main and local strategy. From the former standpoint, although it was most advantageous for France to keep England out of the war as long as possible, war with her was regarded as inevitable, and if it had to come it was in the French interest to strike first and to strike hard, and endeavour to remove England from the board. No method promised so fairly for this purpose as an invasion, and the disturbed state of public feeling in consequence of the Jacobite movement gave prospects of success which appeared peculiarly favourable. If the invasion should succeed, England would cease to be an enemy of any importance. If it failed, it would at any rate cause a withdrawal of British troops from Flanders, to the advantage of the French campaign in that country. The removal of some 6000 Dutch troops and the delay occasioned in sending the English contingents justified this view, and although as a main operation the attempt was a failure, as a diversion it unquestionably played its part in the subsequent campaign on the continent.

From the point of view of local strategy we have seen that the enterprise failed. But what is of interest is to consider why it failed and how near it came to success; that is to say—for discussion must be limited to the naval part of the problem—how near the 10,000 men under Saxe came to landing in England.

If the advice given in the first instance to sail without escort had been followed it is within the bounds of possibility, if not probability, that the crossing would have been made successfully. The necessary preliminaries were an unobserved assembling of the troops, transports, and a sufficient number of light vessels to deal with such opposition as might hastily have been improvised on the British coast. Next would have followed a sudden embargo to prevent intelligence leaking across, a rapid embarkation and a fair crossing which must be coincident with the other parts of the operation. Everything would have depended on no inkling of the intention reaching England. But it must not be forgotten that three large ships of the line lay at the Nore, and if the landing were intended to be within reach of that spot they would have been a serious obstacle. With the landing at Maldon however it may be that these ships would not have arrived in time for successful interference; and moreover it was believed that their commanding officers were in the Jacobite interest. The most serious opposition would have been found in the vessels employed upon the Custom House service, all of



which had guns, and would have been ugly customers to meet, even by the armed transports.

If no escort were provided, the number of transports would have had to be slightly increased, since 1200 men—over a tenth of the army—were to be carried in the ships of de Barailh's squadron. As it was, 38 transports were required; another four or five ships however would not have made a great difference.

As matters turned out the proposal to carry out the expedition in this manner was considered too dangerous, and an escort was arranged for. The order for preparing the ships in Brest and Rochefort was given in November. The rumours of activity in the French dockyards always crossed the Channel quickly, and as in 1742 and 1743 when similar reports were about, a frigate was soon off Brest for intelligence as to the truth of the rumours. If the squadron could have sailed, as was intended, early in January, it is to be doubted whether it could have surprised the ships at Spithead, which already knew, from the 'Phoenix's' report, that the French were preparing. The Spithead ships might however have been masked. There were only twelve of them and de Roquefeuil would have had about seventeen ships even if he detached de Barailh before attacking. If he kept his second in command with him, his force would have been nearly double that of the English. The odds are undeniable, and if the French Admiral could have brought the Spithead ships to action the result could hardly have been other than a defeat of the British squadron. The difficulties however in the way of the French were considerable. To bring a fleet of 21 ships up to Spithead, to find the British ships unready and then to be able to attack them required singularly fortunate coincidences of favourable winds and weather, accompanied by a high degree of professional skill.

If de Roquefeuil should have decided to blockade the squadron at Spithead and to detach Barailh, his seventeen ships would not long have been opposed to twelve only, for the ships from Plymouth would still have been able to join. It is also improbable that a blockade in January would have been long maintained with full strength, even if the finest seamanship were practised. A very small increase in the British strength or decrease in the French would have brought the squadrons nearly to a numerical equality, and placed the Spithead ships in a position to give battle with fair prospects of success. Even if a battle could not be hazarded, the English Admiral would have good chances of slipping away to the eastward, as de Roquefeuil recognised; and then he would still further improve his position by joining the heavy ships at the Nore. Under these conditions it is highly doubtful if the transports would have sailed until the fleet was disposed of. If the French

however should have succeeded in blockading the ships at Spithead, there were still the ships at the Nore in face of which the transports would have no security in their passage without a stronger escort.

The chances against success were indeed considerable once the British Administration had news of the preparation at Brest. But war is no certain science. Boldness might have produced unlooked for results and there is no doubt that given skill and good fortune the attempt might have succeeded. The neglect by the Administration of Norris's reiterated advice placed England in real jeopardy, for no Minister had any right to calculate upon such poor professional skill as was shewn in the French ships.

One point in the actual operations is deserving of consideration—the conduct of the chase. The abandonment of the chase of the French squadron by Norris and his return to the Downs may be compared with Mathews's action in giving over chase after the battle of Toulon and his intention to return to Hyères. Like Mathews, Norris had been in touch with a powerful but somewhat inferior force of ships of the line, and similarly, the enemy had a fleet of transports in close vicinity waiting to pass over a certain stretch of water. Still further to increase the resemblance, the transports had a small number of ships of force with them, and Norris had an insufficient flotilla, and all of that was with the main battle squadron, to whom he could leave the destruction of the transports<sup>1</sup>. The decision made by Norris when he lost trace of the enemy, was the same as that made by Mathews, viz. not to continue in pursuit but to return to the transports and make sure that they did not achieve their object behind his back while he was drawn away after the enemy's battle squadron. From the moment when he knew there was a transport fleet at Dunkirk, his attention was principally directed towards it. "The destruction of them has always been the principal object I have had in view," he wrote to the Duke of Newcastle on March 4th; and his letter of February 23rd expresses the same idea. In that letter he shews that he intended either to leave the battle squadron alone or at most contain it with a portion of his force, but at all events to make sure the troops did not land anywhere on the coast.

This decision was in accordance with the principles both of that and of later times. In the instructions to Sir Charles Thompson<sup>2</sup>, when that officer commanded the squadron off Brest in 1798, the Admiralty directed him to repair off Cape Clear if he heard that the Brest squadron

<sup>1</sup> Beatson, vol. III., shews a long list of frigates and small craft numbering twenty-five of various sizes, as being with Norris. I find, however, that many of the vessels named were in other parts of the sea, and that Norris had nine small craft only with him, all of which were driven down Channel by the gale.

<sup>2</sup> Secret Instructions, 12th January, 1798.

had sailed "and on receiving intelligence that their ships have appeared on any part of the coast of Ireland you are to proceed in pursuit of them and use your best endeavours to take or destroy them; observing however if you have opportunity, first to disable or destroy if it shall be found expedient any transports which may be with them before any attack shall be made on their ships of war: a measure which is intended more effectually to prevent the success of any attempt to land troops on the coast." Lord Keith's instructions to his officers in 1803 were of a similar tenour. He ordered them to direct their chief attention to "the destruction of the ships vessels or boats having men, horses or artillery on board (in preference to that of the vessels by which they are protected) and in the strict execution of this important duty losing sight entirely of the possibility of idle censure for avoiding contact with an armed force, because the prevention of debarkation is the object of primary importance to which every other consideration must give way<sup>1</sup>." Hawke, in 1759, had similar instructions<sup>2</sup>.

Thus Norris, in making the destruction of the transports and the "prevention of debarkation" his principal object was acting as other commanders were to do at a later period. But, on the other hand, if it has been argued that Mathews was wrong in a similar tactical situation in not following the Toulon fleet, how, it may be said, does this accord with the view that Norris was right in abandoning the chase of the Brest squadron?

The answer lies in the fact that although the cases are analogous they are not strategically parallel; there is the difference that one operation was taking place in the Mediterranean and the other in the Channel. In the case of Mathews, the invasion of the threatened territory would not be fatal to England, although it would effect the object which Mathews was sent into the Mediterranean to prevent. In Norris's case the invasion would in all probability be fatal to the country. To state it in this way may at first sight seem a selfish creed, as it appears to express the view that one is justified in deserting one's allies and neglecting their interests when they clash with one's own; but this is not so. The preservation of Italy, in so far as the British Mediterranean squadron could contribute towards it, depended upon the continued superiority of the English fleet without which England could afford no assistance to her allies. The escape of the Toulon ships might have led to a concentration of the enemies' Atlantic and Mediterranean forces. If this were effected the conjunct fleet could be utilised either in the Channel or the inland sea, or in both in succession; and Lombardy would then lie open to an invasion carried out over an

<sup>1</sup> and <sup>2</sup> Corbett, *Some Principles of Maritime Strategy*, p. 238.

undisputed sea. The destruction of the Toulon fleet was therefore imperative, whatever inconvenience might be caused by the temporary absence of the British squadron from the coast. At home the position was different. The temporary absence of the British squadron from the Channel would have allowed an army of about 10,000 men<sup>1</sup> to land in England, to oppose which there were at the time no more than some 9000 regular troops, and these were too widely scattered to oppose a rapid march on London. A successful landing might have encouraged the malcontents in the north to rise; and no one knew for certain how widely disaffection was spread. Any considerable rising in Scotland, such as that of the following year, would have made the position critical in the extreme, and though it is probable that the danger from the Jacobites was exaggerated, the risk was too great to be lightly run. The only sure means of preventing such a situation from arising was to ensure that the French could not cross from Dunkirk.

As in the case of the Armada, the repulse of this attempt has frequently been attributed to the gale of February 25th. The gale did not save England in 1744 any more than it did in 1588. What it did was to prevent a superior British fleet from bringing a French squadron, indifferently manned, to an action the results of which were doubted on neither side. It saved the transports and their escort from destruction at their anchors. It was in fact the French forces that were saved by the gale. The movement of Norris to the Downs has also been regarded as opportune. It was in reality a mistake. If the Admiral had remained at St Helens as he had wished to do he would have had the fairest chance of bringing de Roquefeuil to action in the most favourable circumstances, with his retreat down Channel cut off, and no other way open to return to his port except that long route taken by another fleet a hundred and fifty-six years before.

<sup>1</sup> Norris's information, however, was that the French army was 20,000 strong. See p. 72.



## CHAPTER V

### OPERATIONS IN HOME WATERS 1744

#### *French attack upon the British line of Communications of Mediterranean Fleet*

THE year 1744 marked a change in the character of the continental war. Until this time the efforts of France had been directed to assisting the cause of the Bavarian Emperor and weakening Austria wherever it was possible, though without declaring war upon her. Now she openly declared war against Austria and England, and a new line of conduct was pursued. The Austrian Netherlands were invaded with the definite object of conquering them and bringing them into the French dominions.

This new policy was determined upon by Louis XV against the strongly expressed advice of Marshal Noailles, who recommended his King to confine his endeavours to the attainment of the objects for which he had entered the war<sup>1</sup>, advice similar to that given to Austria by the British and Sardinian representatives regarding the conquest of Naples. The Marshal suggested that the principal objects which had decided the King to take part in the war were, firstly, to prevent the house of Lorraine from succeeding to the Imperial power; secondly, to sustain his engagements with Bavaria and assist her Prince to obtain the Imperial throne; and thirdly, to regain that influence which France considered she should hold in the affairs of the Empire. To attain these ends alone would require the exercise of the whole strength of France; any attempts to make conquests would divert some of that strength and thus prejudice her prospects of success. Besides this, it would do more. It would result in turning all Europe against France and raising up against her new enemies. The reproaches so often levelled against France, argued the Marshal, of sacrificing everything to her own aggrandisement would be revived, and would greatly assist Austria to obtain allies, among whom most certainly would be found England and the United Provinces. It was of the highest importance to the interests of France that the maritime powers should not take part against her. Their intervention would have the inevitable effect of rendering the war long and indecisive, whereas it was essential for France that it should

<sup>1</sup> *Les Campagnes du Maréchal Saxe*, J. Colin. De Noailles's memorandum is there given at length.

be short and decisive. An invasion of Flanders would be bound to revive the jealousies of both England and Holland, involving a sea war, while the land war was certain to be slow on account of the large number of strong places in Flanders whose reduction could only be effected by prolonged siege operations. The Flanders area was moreover the most favourable one for England from a military point of view; a campaign in the heart of Germany drew the English troops far from their base, but one in the Netherlands offered no difficulty owing to the ease with which their communications could be maintained by sea. Finally, and what was most important of all, such a campaign besides diverting strength from the Bavarian Emperor would do nothing to bring Austria to terms, for that power would always look upon the defence of the low countries as the particular business of England and Holland<sup>1</sup>.

The Marshal, proceeding from these premises, recommended making a concentrated effort in Germany with an auxiliary army which should be so strong as to ensure a decisive result and also make it impossible for Austria to afford to detach any troops to Italy. This would enable Spain to conquer the Austrian provinces she desired and bring about a decision in Germany at the same time, without giving the maritime powers any pretext for coming into the war as principals.

For similar reasons de Noailles had protested against the attempted invasion of England, which in his opinion would infallibly have resulted in making England a declared enemy. Apart from the disadvantages of a maritime war the further drawback of having England as an enemy would be that a large force would have to be kept on the French northern frontier to guard against an English attack from that quarter. Troops landed at Dunkirk, which was still insufficiently defended, could march rapidly on Paris and this would have to be guarded against. This line of action, it will be recollected, Lord Stair actually had in mind and regarded it with favour. All arguments pointed to avoiding any movement which entailed dispersion of strength; the invasions both of England and Flanders would tend to that result.

The King of Prussia held similar views. But against the advice of these counsellors Louis XV adopted the conquest of Flanders as the main object of his strategy. War with England and Holland was looked on by him as inevitable in the long run, and, in his opinion, it was best that France should have the advantage of the initiative and of conducting a campaign near her own frontiers instead of in the more remote theatres in Bohemia and Bavaria. An army of 100,000 men was therefore prepared for the invasion of the Netherlands and this was placed under de Noailles, with Saxe as his second in command.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Introduction, in which the justice of this view is corroborated.

The armies in this new European war stretched across Europe from the North Sea to the Adriatic. In the north de Noailles with his 100,000 men was opposed by a weak allied army of some 60,000 Austrian, English and Dutch troops. In Alsace a Franco-Bavarian army under Marshal Coigny faced an Austrian army under Prince Charles of Lorraine. In Provence a third French force of 10,000 men under the Prince de Conti reinforced a Spanish army of 60,000 men under the Marquis de la Mina, whose object was the invasion of Italy. Another Spanish army under de Gages, consisting of about 7000 men, was on the banks of the river Foglia whither it had been pushed back by the Austrians under Prince Lobkowitz, who was now at Rimini. The junction of these Spanish forces was the means by which the conquest of Lombardy was to be effected.

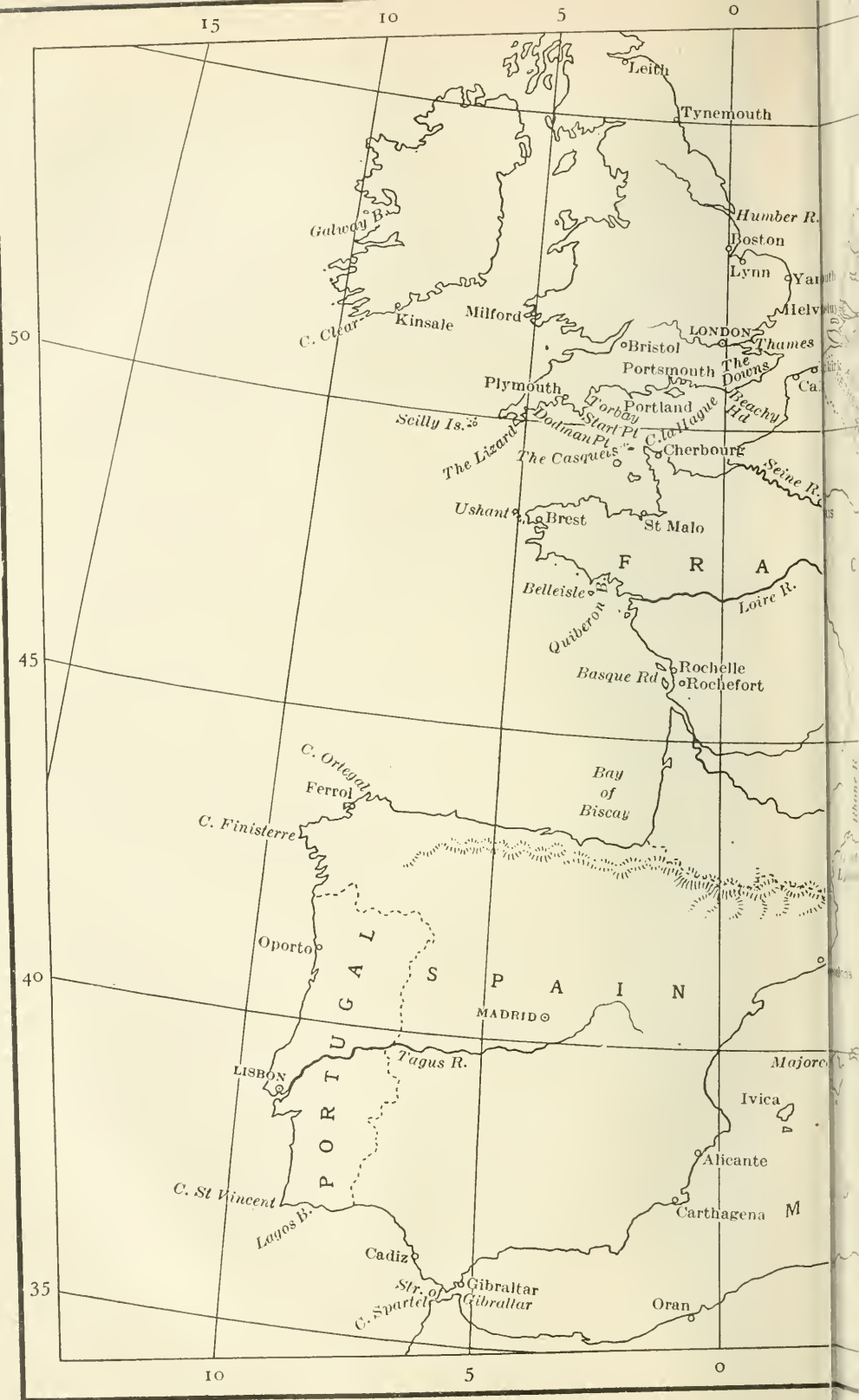
The three factors which stood immediately in the way of the junction were the Piedmontese army under the King of Sardinia, Lobkowitz's army and the British Mediterranean fleet. Indirectly, the results of the campaign in Italy were affected by the operations of the armies in the Netherlands and in Alsace, and of the fleets in the Atlantic. The movements of these fleets and their part in the continental war will be traced in this chapter.

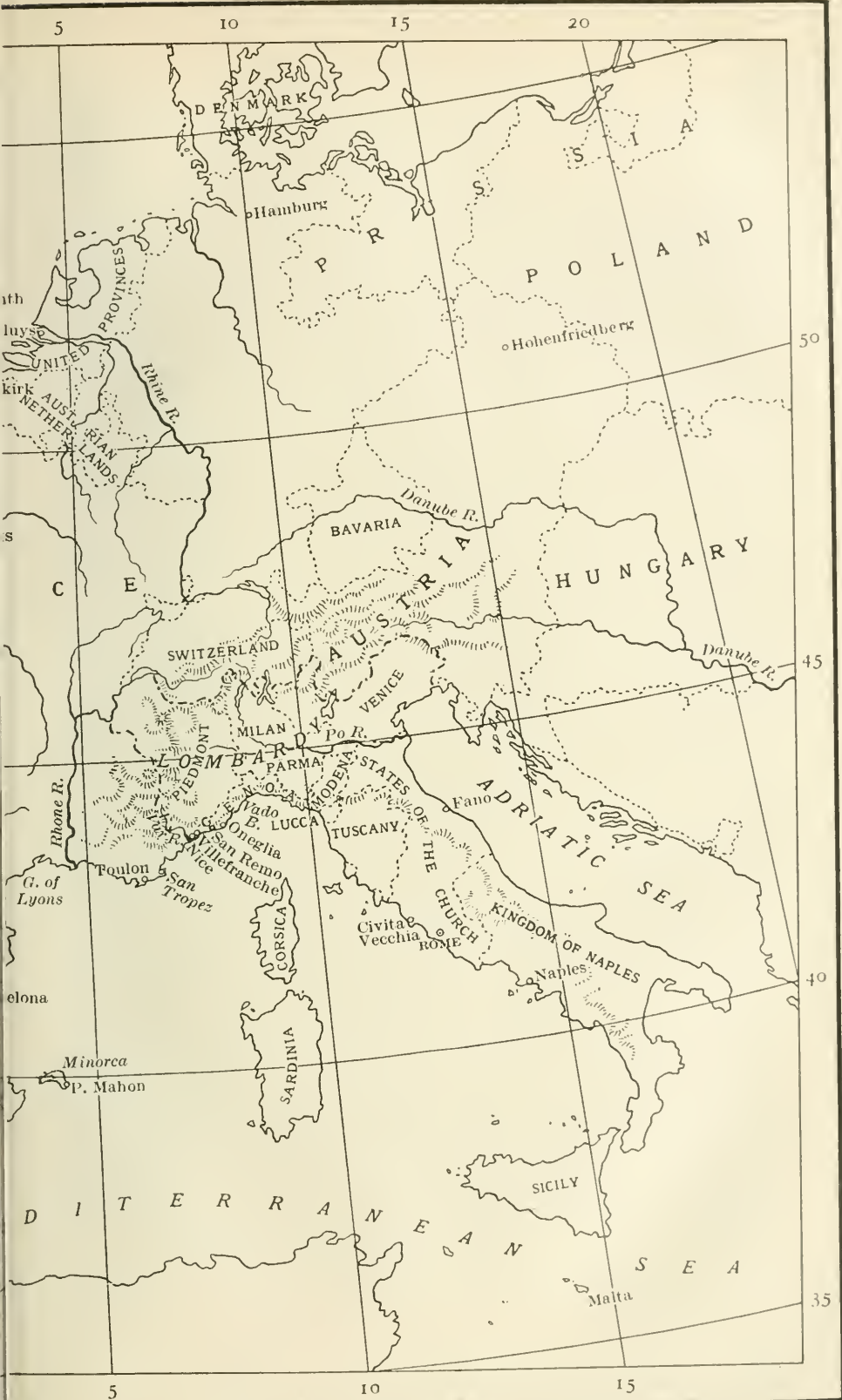
The events in home waters hinged largely on the movements of the fleet of victuallers which was ordered to sail to the Mediterranean to meet the pressing demands of Mathews's squadron. We have seen that Sir Charles Hardy was ordered to escort it with a squadron as far as Brest<sup>1</sup>, and then to send it on to Mathews under convoy of two heavy frigates. The strong N.E. winds which prevented Norris from attacking the French transports in Dunkirk Road delayed Hardy's sailing, and he did not leave the Downs until March 15th. When he reached Spithead, Hardy was in want of many things. Anchors and cables had been lost in the gale, provisions were short and he had nearly 300 sick to put ashore; he was therefore unable to sail immediately. In the meanwhile news had come from the Mediterranean that the Toulon fleet had escaped from Mathews. Whither it was bound was unknown and the gravest anxiety was felt as to its future movements. The Privy Council met on March 15th and drew up instructions to be sent immediately to Mathews, directing him, if the French should pass the Straits of Gibraltar, to detach an officer with a superior force to follow them, who was to blockade them in Cadiz if they had put in there, or to come to Spithead if they had gone to Brest; the Commander-in-Chief himself, with a sufficient squadron to perform the necessary services, would in such an event remain in the Mediterranean. But as de Court

<sup>1</sup> See *ante*, p. 86.











might already be on his way into the Atlantic it was considered unsafe for the invaluable convoy to sail, and orders were sent to Hardy to remain at Spithead until further instructions.

Hardy, who had used the utmost endeavours to hasten his preparations, and thus completed his supplies in a few days, now remained awaiting his new orders. These were soon forthcoming. On March 22nd the French Minister, M. Amelot, informed Mr Thompson, the British Minister, of the intention of France to declare war at once. The Council thereupon decided to wait no longer, but to send Hardy to sea immediately, with orders to see the victuallers clear of Brest and then to return with all possible despatch to Spithead<sup>1</sup>. The previous instructions which Norris had given were altered. The 'Roebuck' and 'Preston,' instead of carrying the victuallers to join Mathews, were to escort them only so far as the Tagus and thence communicate with Mathews, informing him that they were in the river, and directing him to give the necessary orders for the completion of their voyage. This alteration was made, it is evident, in consequence of a suggestion in Mathews's letter in which he expressed the fear that the convoy might be intercepted by the Brest or Toulon squadrons, as the time of its sailing would, he said, be bound to be known to them and they would not improbably attempt its capture either off Brest or in the approaches to Gibraltar.

Hardy received the order next day (March 24th); he replied that he would sail on the morrow. But when the morrow came it brought with it a S.W. gale and such dirty weather that to weigh and get down Channel was impossible. On this day France declared war; yet for a whole week he had to ride at Spithead with his yards and topmasts down. At last on the 31st the wind came N.N.W., and Hardy sailed with the intention "to use my utmost endeavours to come up with all ships and vessels belonging to the French King and his subjects<sup>2</sup>."

Hardy's "utmost endeavours" were cut short by the weather; the wind failed him and he was obliged once more to anchor. Two days later he heard in a letter from Amsterdam that the Brest squadron was at sea; but now he could do nothing, for a gale from W. and S.W. was blowing and he could not move from his anchors. A period of uncertainty now followed and though the rumour as to the Brest squadron was not confirmed the store ships and fleet were ordered to remain where they were. Ten days later—on April 12th—the Admiralty at length decided to order Hardy to sail, and sent him instructions to proceed to sea with the fleet, taking the victuallers, store ships, ordnance ships and all the trade bound to the Mediterranean and the

<sup>1</sup> Minutes of the Privy Council.

<sup>2</sup> In letters. Sir Charles Hardy to Secretary of Admiralty.



southward—of which last a great quantity had collected as no convoy had been available since February—and carry it down Channel. He was ordered to send a ship ahead to see what ships were in Brest, and, if the French squadron was still there, to execute his previous orders of carrying the convoy clear of the dangerous area and then bring his squadron back to Spithead with all despatch; but if he should find that a detachment of the French had sailed he was to strengthen the convoy proportionately to accompany the trade as far as Lisbon. If however the whole Brest squadron or a considerable number of them were at sea, he was then to carry the convoy to Lisbon with his whole fleet.

So vast was the throng of ships under his charge that he could not get away at once, but he sent the 'Phoenix' and another clean 20-gun ship to Brest for intelligence. Two days later he received information<sup>1</sup> which clearly indicated that a French squadron was cruising to intercept the convoy. Its strength was uncertain. Thirteen sail were said to have left Brest, but there were also known to be another six sail cruising under Camilly to meet and protect the homeward bound French trade from the West Indies. Although the squadron under Hardy's command would be sufficient to deal with the main force which was reported off Finisterre, it would be unduly weak if that force should have been joined by the other six ships which were probably in the same area. It is also evident that Hardy viewed with some apprehension the taking of the Channel squadron so far as Lisbon without a more certain knowledge of the whereabouts of the Brest squadron than would be furnished by the mere knowledge of its absence from Brest. In his absence so far south the Channel would be left exposed and he suggested that he might find his return blocked by a superior French squadron.

In reply the Admiralty ordered two more ships to join him—the 'Princess Mary' 60, and 'Torrington' 40. The former, commanded by Captain Thomas Smith—"Tom of ten thousand"—was reported by her captain to be unfit for the sea; the latter reached him, but being only a 40-gun ship was a scanty reinforcement.

On the 23rd April, when the wind at last served to carry the great convoy down Channel, Hardy weighed and made a rapid passage to Lisbon, where he arrived on May 3rd, saw the convoy into the river and returned with the utmost despatch, arriving at Spithead with the squadron on the 20th May. He saw nothing of the French squadron on his passage out or back, but he passed close to a French division;

<sup>1</sup> Captain Young of the 'Kinsale' arrived on 15th April with information from a Dutch ship that she had met thirteen sail of French ships cruising to the westward of Ushant.

and, though he did not learn of it until afterwards, he lost one of the finest 70-gun ships of his squadron, the 'Northumberland,' commanded by Captain Watson, an officer who had distinguished himself in the West Indian operations under Vernon. On the 8th May, when the Admiral was on his way back and somewhat to the northward of Finisterre, a sail was sighted to the north-eastward; Hardy detached the 'Northumberland' to speak her, with orders not to chase out of sight of the squadron. Watson followed the stranger for some time. At about 2 o'clock in the afternoon a thick haze came on in which he lost sight of his main body. A little later, when the haze cleared somewhat, three sail of French men-of-war<sup>1</sup> were sighted standing to the westward. The French, who were not in close order, brought to under their topsails. Watson, who was to windward, stood down for them and coming up with the weathermost of them engaged her. Instead of taking advantage of the position in which he had caught her, separated from her consorts, Watson continued running to leeward to engage the 'Mars' as well and by so doing brought himself into action with the whole French force. The 'Northumberland' sustained an unequal combat for upwards of three hours. Watson himself was severely wounded and carried below, and the ship was then surrendered by the Master, who ordered the colours to be hauled down without reference to the first Lieutenant, for which action he was condemned by a Court Martial to be imprisoned for life in the Marshalsea<sup>2</sup>.

One small capture was made during the cruise. The 'Medée' 26, commanded by the Chevalier Hocquart which sailed from Brest on April 24th, ran into Hardy's squadron on the 27th about 60 leagues S.W. from Ushant. The 'Dreadnought' 60 and 'Grampus' sloop were detached after her and, after a fifty hour chase, ran her down and brought her into Spithead on May 12th.

The declaration of war<sup>3</sup> by France had at once resulted in the sending of a host of French privateers to sea. Two days before the

<sup>1</sup> 'Mars' 64, 'Content' 62, 'Vénus' 26, under de Conflans.

<sup>2</sup> A good description of this action appears in Charnock, vol. iv. p. 371. See also the court martial on the Master in P.R.O. *Courts Martial*.

<sup>3</sup> The impending declaration of war was known to the Council on March 22nd, when a large meeting was held to discuss the necessary steps to be taken. The divers points referred to in the minutes of the meeting were: "Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, Governors and Commander-in-chief in West Indies, Commander-in-chief Mediterranean, Lords Commissioners of Admiralty, Ministers at foreign Courts and Merchants at all British ports to be informed. To communicate with France as to how long the Packet Boats shall pass between the nations. Postmaster-General to state present force and condition of Packet Boats, and the practice last war. Notice to Directors of East India Company. Consideration to be had for security of East India ships, and molesting those of France on their return to Europe, and the times of return of the several branches of their trade, and the best and most probable means of intercepting them." *S.P. Domestic, Various V.*

declaration, the Commandant at Dunkirk, M. de Bart, had boasted that in forty-eight hours he hoped to have a dozen prizes in Dunkirk harbour, and visions of the palmy days of his father must have appeared before his eyes. The ships that had been collected as transports were at once equipped as privateers, and no fewer than 30 well-armed vessels were ready in Dunkirk alone before a week was out. Even the fishing boats were preparing to take their part, while the merchants in all directions began transforming their vessels into ships of war<sup>1</sup>. The news that this was being done soon reached England and caused the Duke of Newcastle to write to the Admiralty directing the Lords Commissioners to send orders to Norris to appoint ships as necessary, or to appoint them themselves, to cruise in proper parts of the Channel for the protection of trade and the destruction of the Dunkirk privateers. The direction of the order will be noted. Norris was still in command of the ships in home waters and all orders had to be passed through him, owing to the terms of his instructions of February 3rd. It would appear that it was this order, which is dated March 26th, which finally brought matters to a head and caused the serious memorial addressed by the Admiralty to the King, dated March 29th, to which reference has already been made.

The great strain thrown upon the Navy by the increase in the enemy's strength at sea was felt at once. The first measure to supplement the naval forces was as usual the issue of Letters of Marque and Reprisal, which shipowners were invited to take out on March 30th<sup>2</sup>. But a step of greater importance was taken a fortnight later on April 14th when the Government called upon the States-General to furnish the 20 men-of-war which they were bound by treaty to supply. The Dutch promptly replied that the ships would be provided, and their five Admiralties—Maas, Amsterdam, Middelburg, Friesland and North Holland—began to prepare their ships<sup>3</sup>. In order to prevent jealousies, five senior flag officers had to be appointed<sup>4</sup> and the provinces of Maas and Amsterdam appointed each a Lieutenant-Admiral, a Vice-Admiral and a Rear-Admiral to their squadrons, making in all nine flags in a fleet of nineteen ships. It was however not until July that the first detachment of this auxiliary squadron reached Spithead, and that detachment consisted of but six ships<sup>5</sup>. Pending the arrival of this tardy

<sup>1</sup> Secretary of State's letters to Admiralty. March 26th to April 2nd, 1744.

<sup>2</sup> *London Gazette*.

<sup>3</sup> Maas 4, Amsterdam 8, Middelburg 3, Friesland 2, and North Holland 3. Nineteen of these were begun at once.

<sup>4</sup> Mr Trevor to Lord Carteret, May 15th, 1744. Papers relating to Dutch Auxiliary Squadrons. Ad. Sec. In letters.

<sup>5</sup> 'Dordrecht' 54, 'Damiate' 64, 'Leeuwenhorst' 54, 'Edam' 54, 'Assendelft' 54, 'Delft' 54. Vice-Admirals t'Hooft and Scrijver and Rear-Admiral Reynst had their flags on board the first three ships respectively. Admiral Grave with two more ships joined a little later.

assistance we must see what was happening in other parts of the Channel after Hardy's return.

The French squadron of six ships which had been cruising in the Bay under Camilly had returned in the early days of May to Brest, but another six were reported to have been sent out to relieve them. The Admiralty now<sup>1</sup> fitted out two small divisions to cruise for the protection of trade against the privateers. These divisions were under the commands of Captains Boscawen and Mostyn; the former, with the 'Dreadnought' 60 and 'Prince Frederick' 70, was stationed off Cape Clear to meet the homeward bound trade making that landfall, and was ordered to cruise for thirty days; the latter, with the 'Hampton Court' 70, 'Chester' 50 and 'Grampus' sloop, was ordered to cruise from the Soundings to the Bay of Biscay in lat. 46° to 48° and to stay out as long as his provisions would last. The instructions of both commanders related to clearing the sea of the enemy's privateers and to warning all home-coming ships of the rupture with France.

These instructions were issued on May 19th, and on the 20th, as we have seen, Hardy returned to Spithead without having seen or heard of the French squadron. News of it was urgently required and a 20-gun ship, the 'Squirrel,' Captain Williams, was therefore ordered<sup>2</sup> "to proceed to sea without loss of time over to the coast of France... and range along the coast from Calais to Brest and endeavour to inform yourself by all means possible of the enemy's naval strength at that port, the number of ships of war there, their condition and force, and in what forwardness for the sea. If you find yourself unable this way to get sufficient intelligence, you are to go into Brest water, if you can with safety, and endeavour to inform yourself by all means possible of the afore-mentioned particulars, and when you have got such an account as can be depended on, you are to make the best of your way to the first port you can make in England and send us an account thereof by express, remaining in that port 'til further order. You are likewise to endeavour to inform yourself of what naval preparations are making at Rochefort or in any other ports of West France, and to send us an account thereof."

Williams, who had just escorted a convoy of fifty vessels up Channel from Spithead to the Downs, received this order on the 25th May. He was unable to sail immediately as he had no pilots for the French coast and was himself unacquainted with the navigation; but having after some delays procured a pilot he left the Downs for Spithead from whence he eventually sailed on June 5th, having been delayed by calms and

<sup>1</sup> Instructions of May 19th, 1744. Orders and Instructions.

<sup>2</sup> Orders of May 21st, 1744. Out letters.



fogs. He got news from some Dutch doggers that a squadron of three frigates was in Rochelle on May 27th, about to sail to the West Indies with six large merchant ships, and that ten sail of large ships, apparently men-of-war but of what nationality the Dutchman was uncertain, had been sighted cruising off the Scillies on June 3rd. This news he sent by express to the Admiralty from Weymouth, and then proceeded down Channel towards Brest. From some other doggers which he met on the 8th and 9th he learned that there had been seven frigates at Rochelle on May 31st, ready to sail, whose destination was unknown; and that the French Admiral was said to be at Brest; but as the Dutchman told him at the same time that a 56 and a 40-gun ship were being kept cruising outside Brest, Williams deemed that it would not be possible for him to get a sight of Brest water, and he therefore hastened back to Portland to give this information to the Admiralty where it arrived by express on the 4th June.

If this news were correct, it indicated that the main body of the French was still at Brest and that the employment of their Atlantic squadrons at present consisted in maintaining a strong cruising force to the westward, based upon Brest, while at Rochefort they were making arrangements to convoy their trade to the westward.

In the meantime, without waiting for further news from Brest, Hardy had been ordered on May 23rd to haul down his flag, and the squadron he had commanded had been broken up. Four of the ships were sent into the dockyard for caulking in preparation for going to the Mediterranean<sup>1</sup>, three others were sent in for a refit<sup>2</sup>, another<sup>3</sup> was ordered to fit out as a flagship for the West Indies, and the 'Princess Mary' was sent to Plymouth to be stored for foreign service. The policy of not keeping a fleet in constant readiness which had recently so nearly proved fatal to the kingdom was being deliberately repeated by Lord Winchelsea and the gentlemen who formed the Board of Admiralty; and this at the very time when all their advices shewed that the French had a powerful force at or about Brest, a part at least of which was working in the Soundings where it constituted the most serious threat to the home coming trade, and to the scattered cruisers which were working without cover under Boscawen and Mostyn. Some steps were however taken, though on a minor scale, to protect the trade. Convoys were provided for the Channel and Baltic, a 60-gun ship—the 'Jersey'—was ordered to Newfoundland with the trade and to reinforce the 'Kinsale' already there; the 'Portmahon,' 20, was ordered to Bristol

<sup>1</sup> 'Victory,' 'St George,' 'Duke,' 'Princess Amelia.'

<sup>2</sup> 'Monmouth,' 'Captain,' 'Torrington.'

<sup>3</sup> 'Cornwall.' All these orders were dated May 22nd.

to protect the local trade<sup>1</sup>; a small squadron was appointed<sup>2</sup> to cruise off Dunkirk to intercept the enemy's privateers; and two other 20-gun ships, the 'Sheerness' and 'Aldbrough,' under Captain Rodney, were to cruise between the Orkney and Shetland Islands to protect the trade going north-about<sup>3</sup>. But for all this the largest and most important branch of British trade was strangled. The Jamaica fleet, which was ready and due to sail in April, could not be sent with safety and did not leave England until November—a delay of no less than seven months, the effect of which can well be imagined.

The solicitude of the Admiralty for the Channel trade is not difficult to appreciate. During the four preceding years of war with Spain alone, British merchant ships had been taken in numbers in the very heart of the Channel by privateers from the Spanish ports. Now that France was also an enemy it might well be expected that these depredations would increase prodigiously. There was ample evidence in the Admiralty records as to the damage that could be done by the privateers of the northern French ports; indeed, many statesmen then living must have remembered the state of affairs in the early years of the century, less than forty years previously, when Dunkirk and Malouin vessels lay calmly at anchor outside the ports on the Sussex coast and captured every small trader that put to sea. But this does not absolve the Admiralty from leaving the main squadrons of the enemy unwatched. The Board's omission for well upon two months to take any steps to endeavour to bring the strong French cruising squadron under Camilly to action constitutes a severe criticism of their method of employing of the fleet. Thus, we have seen that after Hardy returned on May 20th, the 'Squirrel' was ordered next day to go and look into Brest. The choice of a vessel which was lying at the Nore in preference to one from Plymouth or a more westerly port—there were frigates and sloops at Portsmouth, Plymouth and at Bristol—shews a lack of appreciation of the importance of getting the earliest possible news of the state of affairs at Brest. Hardy's squadron was not kept together ready for use, and Hardy himself was directed to haul down his flag, his work being regarded as finished when he had seen the Mediterranean convoy into Lisbon. Williams's report that ten sail of French were at sea off the Scillies, a report confirmed by advices from the Hague as to the move-

<sup>1</sup> Instructions of June 6th, 1744.

<sup>2</sup> Instructions of 9th June. These ships were 'Torrington' 44, 'Eltham' 44, 'Success' 20, 'Merton' and 'Vulture' sloops and two Folkestone cutters. Three of these had already been cruising between Beachy Head and the South Foreland by instructions of April 25th; the instructions of 9th June altered the arrangement from cruising in the Channel to a specific blockade of Dunkirk.

<sup>3</sup> Instructions of June 9th.

ments of the Brest squadron, reached the Admiralty on June 6th. No steps were taken to get a strong squadron to sea to deal with them and it was not until July 14th that orders were given even for preparing a squadron to cruise to the westward.

In the meantime Brest was left unwatched, and on July 7th the main body of the squadron put to sea. This news was sent from Brest two days later in a letter dated July  $\frac{9}{16}$ , but the date of the receipt of the letter is not recorded; it would probably reach London on about the 12th. At length on the 14th July, Sir John Balchen was ordered to take command of a strong squadron to proceed in quest of the French.

His instructions directed him to lose no time in proceeding to sea, taking with him the trade to Newfoundland, New England, Virginia, Maryland, Portugal and the Mediterranean. "You are," the instructions ran, "in your way down the Channel to endeavour to get intelligence by all possible means, of the strength and motions of the enemy, and what number of ships they have either at Brest or in other ports of West France, or at sea, and upon what stations they are cruising. And, if you judge proper, you may send a clean frigate or sloop ahead, to see what ships are in Brest or else to bring you what intelligence her Captain can learn from the French fishing boats or otherwise.

"You are, when you judge it proper, to see all the outward bound trade 100 or 150 leagues into the sea, or so far as you think fit according to the information you may have of the enemy, giving the Commanders of the several convoys instructions to keep company so far as their respective ways lie together, for their better security, and when they come to separate, to put in execution the Instructions they have received from us for proceeding upon their respective voyages.

"When you have parted with the trade, you are to proceed to cruise with the squadron under your command on a station mentioned in the inclosed sealed packet, which you may open when you think fit, taking care not to communicate it sooner than is proper.

"But notwithstanding we have assigned you that particular station to cruise on, you are at liberty to change it for any other you shall judge, from intelligence you may receive, to be more likely for meeting with the enemy's squadrons or for any considerable number of their trade falling into your hands, or for protecting any considerable trade of his Majesty's subjects, and either to continue on the new, or return to the former station, as you shall judge best for his Majesty's service.

"You are to continue cruising for the space of six weeks, and then return with the squadron to Spithead.

"But notwithstanding what is before directed in case you shall get

good information that a considerable number of the enemy's ships of war are in Brest, you are to repair off of that port, and, if you find the same to be true, you are to cruise on such stations as may prevent their coming out, sending a particular account thereof to us by express, and to expect our further orders.

"In case it shall happen that the convoy of the trade to Portugal and the Mediterranean shall not be ready to sail, when you are so, you are not to stay for them, but to proceed to sea without them, and to put the other parts of these our instructions into execution<sup>1</sup>."

Detained by foul winds like Hardy before him, Balchen was not able to sail. A fresh gale blew from W. by S., and he was obliged to wait for a fair wind, "as here are a great number of ships," he wrote on the 24th, "it will not be prudent to put to sea without a leading gale down Channel." His waiting had however one compensation, as it brought him a reinforcement of one ship and some fresh information about the French. The 'Prince Frederick,' Captain Harry Norris, which was the second ship of Boscawen's division cruising to the westward, arrived late in the evening of the 24th and reported that she and the 'Dreadnought' had fallen in with a French squadron of thirteen sail of large ships on July 11th—a fortnight before—85 leagues S.S.W. from the Lizard. The two British ships had been chased and fired upon, but had escaped. Boscawen, in his Journal, wrote of the encounter thus: "At 4 P.M. saw 13 sail who chased us and came up very fast. Imagining 'em to be a French fleet (which proved so) made sail from 'em. One of 'em fired at the Prince Frederick; she returned it; then hauled up from the Frederick to us and came up with us within point blank shot. At 6 we fired our stern chase and she her broadside at us under French colours. We cut away our best and small bower anchors and a lower steering sail, being foul of the best bower. At 7 another fired several shot at us and the first ship a broadside. We kept a continual [fire] with six guns (our stern chase) till ten, then left off, the enemy dropping astern a little." The French pursued all night and the two ships did not eventually get away until the afternoon of the next day. It was a most fortunate escape for them; and incidentally furnished a warning of the risks run by weak cruising forces operating without cover.

<sup>1</sup> Out letters. July 14th, 1744. The instructions in the sealed packet have not been discovered.



## THE FLEET UNDER SIR JOHN BALCHEN.

25 JULY, 1744<sup>1</sup>.

Sir John Balchen's fleet and his line of battle are here shewn. The Dutch division was appointed to lead with starboard tacks on board and the 'Princess Mary' with the larboard tacks. It will be observed that in spite of the individual weakness of the Dutch ships Balchen kept them as a squadron by themselves. Their relation as auxiliaries to the British squadron was indicated by their hoisting English Jacks and so fighting partly under English colours.

'Damiate'	64	} ...Vice-Admiral Scrijver
'Edam'	54	
'Dordrecht'	54	} ...Vice-Admiral t'Hooft
'Delft'	54	
'Assendelft'	54	} ...Rear-Admiral Reynst
'Leeuwenhorst'	54	
'Dreadnought'	60	}
'Hampton Court'	70	
'Jersey'	60	
'Augusta'	60	
'Captain'	70	
'Victory' (flag)	100	} ...Sir John Balchen
'Princess Amelia'	80	
		Admiral of the White
'Falkland'	50	}
'Suffolk'	70	
'St George'	90	
'Strafford'	60	
'Exeter'	60	
		Vice-Admiral of the Blue
'Sunderland'	60	}
'Monmouth'	70	
'Duke'	90	
'Prince Frederick'	70	
'Princess Mary'	60	
		...James Steuart
		Vice-Admiral of the Red

Two more Dutch ships under Admiral Grave joined Balchen before he sailed.

<sup>1</sup> P.R.O. In letters, Sir John Balchen, 25th July, 1744.

Directly this news of the Brest squadron, as reported by Boscawen and Norris, reached the Admiralty, they sent instructions (dated July 25th) to Balchen to proceed to sea immediately without waiting for the trade. Balchen, who had dropped down to St Helens, was lying in that Road with a fresh W. by S. wind blowing; relieved however of the great unwieldy mass of shipping, he was free to sail, foul wind or fair, and he replied that he would do so next morning. The wind came to his aid in a fortunate manner, shifting to N. by E. in the night; he weighed at daylight, the fair wind now allowing him to take the trade with him, and proceeded down Channel. He gave his ships the following instructions as to rendezvous, "Latitude  $48^{\circ}$  to  $49\frac{1}{2}^{\circ}$ , 50 to 70 leagues to the westward of the Lizard, in which Latitude you are to cruise six weeks and then return to Spithead: but in case you do not find me in this station and you gain intelligence where I may be cruising you are then to make the best of your way to endeavour to join me<sup>1</sup>."

In spite of the advantages of the reinforcement and the extra intelligence, the delay occasioned by the foul wind proved unfortunate. The second day that Balchen was at sea he met a merchant vessel from New York from whom he learnt that so lately as July 25th a French fleet of sixteen sail were off the Dodman. But clearly it was not the foul wind only that is to be blamed for Balchen's not being at sea and thus missing the French. The squadron should have been made ready and got to sea earlier, and when destined for the purely military object of destroying the French squadron, should not have been burdened with the multitudinous fleet of merchant vessels bound to all parts of the world.

Balchen, having tided down Channel without further news of the French, sent the 'Falkland' and 'Fly' sloop to Brest for intelligence. These ships looked into Brest water and saw but nine small sail in the Roads, of which the two biggest were 50-gun ships. "Not being able to gain any other intelligence," wrote the Admiral, "I made the best of my way into the sea in hopes of clearing it from the Privateers or meeting some of the enemy's ships of war, that the trade coming out might not fall into their hands." With what object the French were cruising he did not know; but he expected them to be aiming at the trade leaving and arriving in the Soundings.

His squadron ran into and captured six large French San Domingo ships on the 9th August, but it was not until the 14th that he got an inkling of where the Brest squadron might be. On that day he met a Portuguese from Cadiz who told him that three weeks earlier he had met a squadron of six French ships off St Vincent, bound to Cadiz.

<sup>1</sup> In letters, Sir John Balchen, July 27th, 1744.

Balchen<sup>1</sup>, without hesitation, decided at once to go as far as St Vincent and Spartel, seeing the trade into safety, and then to return to his former station, where he expected the main body of the French might be found, and where he best could cover the trade from their attack.

So far the Admiralty were still in ignorance of what the Brest squadron was doing. On Aug. 11th they got their first certain news. On that day the 'Cruiser' sloop brought intelligence, which she had picked up from a neutral, that the whole Brest squadron had left harbour by two's and three's in the early days of July and had been seen at sea, to the number of seventeen sail of from 40 to 70 guns on July 15th. Lord Winchelsea, who was the only member of the Board in London when this news came in, at once sent orders for the 'Saltash' sloop to proceed to sea to seek the French squadron and for the 'Cruiser' sloop to find Balchen in his rendezvous and inform him of the strength of the enemy.

The 'Cruiser' did not find Balchen, for he had already gone south with the trade in consequence of the Portuguese ship's report. A fortnight of the highest tension followed. Balchen was lost, and a powerful French squadron, whose intention could not be guessed, was undoubtedly at sea. Invasion was again in every one's mind. Even when news came on August 24th as to whither the French had gone, one bad situation was only changed for another. On that day a letter from Lisbon was received from Captain Henry Osborn of the 'Princess Caroline,' dated August 13th, which informed the Admiralty that the French were cruising in two strong divisions off Lisbon and Cadiz, the former holding up the Mediterranean convoy, the latter covering de Torres's long delayed return from the West Indies. The supplies, so urgently needed in the Mediterranean in February, were still blocked up in the Tagus, and, what was worse, five ships which Admiral Mathews had been obliged to detach to bring them along were blocked up with them, and to what straits his fleet, which was provisioned only up to April 1st, might be reduced could only be imagined. Nor was this all. The whole campaign in Italy depended upon the cooperation of the fleet. If for want of supplies that force could not lend its aid to the armies of our allies, the cause of Austria would be lost. Such was the result of the failure of the Administration to fit out and maintain a squadron to the westward and keep Brest under either a constant watch or an effective blockade. The advice which Norris had given in 1740 as to the strategy to be employed against Spain would doubtless have been repeated by him when war broke out with France. But Norris's resignation had been accepted, and Lord Winchelsea, Dr Lee

<sup>1</sup> In letters, Balchen, August 27th, 1744.

and Mr Cokburne were the ruling powers in naval affairs. This was the result of their rule.

When the news of the French fleet's whereabouts arrived on August 24th, a new set of instructions was at once got out for Balchen, and despatched to him that day by a frigate. They ran thus:

"Captain Osborn of the *Princess Caroline* having informed us in his letter dated the 13th inst. at Lisbon that a considerable squadron of French ships are cruising off of Cape St Vincent and on the coast of Portugal, in separate divisions, in order to intercept the convoy of victuallers and storeships bound from Lisbon to the Mediterranean and also with a view to secure the return of the squadron commanded by Adl. de Torres which is supposed to be on their way home from the West Indies to Cadiz; for which reason he cannot depart from Lisbon without a reinforcement of ships, we...do hereby require and direct you to proceed immediately with the English and Dutch ships under your command off of the Rock of Lisbon and to take from thence along with you the said victuallers and storeships as also Captain Osborn and all his Majesty's ships of war under his command, and proceed with them to Gibraltar."

On reaching Gibraltar he was to send a clean frigate to inform the Commander-in-Chief that the convoy had arrived, and to strengthen Osborn's squadron with one or more ships—up to four—as he deemed necessary. The frigate was to await instructions from the Admiral in the Mediterranean; or, if her captain should receive news of the strength and situation of the enemy which would permit his sailing, to proceed at once to Mahon. Having carried out these instructions, Balchen was directed "to proceed in quest of the Brest squadron wherever you shall hear them to be, which is to be the principal object of your care."

These instructions turned out to be unnecessary for Balchen had already anticipated them. Working south he came off the Tagus on August 30th, and there found the situation which Osborn had described. He at once took the victuallers out of the river and escorted them to Gibraltar, the French squadron, which was twelve ships strong, retiring before him into Cadiz. Thither Balchen followed it and blocked it up. At last a grip upon the principal French force had been obtained.

At the Admiralty the greatest anxiety prevailed lest the Atlantic and Mediterranean squadrons of both France and Spain should join. Though it was difficult to trace in their movements any concerted plan, the natural inference was that a conjunction of their forces would be made in order to crush the British naval forces and possibly to follow up the blow by an invasion of the kingdom.



The enemy however had no such plans. Instead of pursuing the sound strategical course of acting in conjunction with the Spaniards against the main British forces, the French had adopted a *guerre-de-course* by squadrons, forming a chain from the Straits of Gibraltar to the Channel. Camilly with his six ships worked in the Soundings; de Nesmond with about the same number patrolled from Belleisle to Cape Finisterre; Rochambeau with another force stretched from Finisterre to Cape St Vincent—all of these squadrons being made up out of the Brest and Rochefort ships. The area from St Vincent to the Straits of Gibraltar was covered by a division from Toulon, under the command of de Piosin. These arrangements were made on July 31/Aug. 10. "Ces changements," wrote the Minister of Marine, "ont été jugé nécessaires pour mieux former la chaîne que le Roy veut faire par ses vaisseaux depuis la Manche jusqu'au détroit afin d'interrompre autant qu'il sera possible la navigation des vaisseaux Anglais et en même temps de protéger celle de nos vaisseaux qui reviennent des colonies<sup>1</sup>." The weakness of this arrangement carries its own condemnation.

It could not however be expected that our Ministry or Admiralty should discover immediately this complete reversal of strategy. The beginning of the war, both in the Mediterranean and Channel, had been characterised by attempts to destroy the British naval forces and invade the kingdom; the assumption that further attempts would be made with the same general end in view was but natural. No effort was spared therefore to assemble a superior squadron in the neighbourhood of the Straits' mouth.

Advices from Oporto received on September 10th confirmed Osborn's information that a French squadron was cruising near Cape St Vincent; in reply, a strong reinforcement for Balchen was ordered to get ready with the utmost despatch, composed of such ships in the home ports as were fit, together with those ships which had been prepared for the West Indies<sup>2</sup>. Admiral Davers, who had been appointed to relieve Sir Chaloner Ogle at Jamaica, was placed in command, with Admiral Henry Medley, who had been going to the Mediterranean, as his second. Davers was ordered to proceed with the utmost despatch to join Balchen, seeking him first in his rendezvous in the Bay, then at Lisbon, and if not there, at Gibraltar. Instructions were at the same time sent to Balchen directing him to retain Davers under his command so long as he found it necessary in consequence of the enemy being in

<sup>1</sup> *Archives de la Marine*, f. 373.

<sup>2</sup> 'Edinburgh,' 'Lenox,' 'Weymouth,' 'Falkland,' 'Torrington,' 'Backvliet' (Dutch), and 'Cornwall,' 'Sandwich,' 'Enterprise' and 'Grampus.' The last four were those ordered for the West Indies. The orders are dated September 16th.

superior force. The Brest squadron was not however the only objective given to Balchen. If he should receive good intelligence that de Torres was on his way home from Havana with the Spanish squadron, bound either for Cadiz or Ferrol, he was directed to endeavour to intercept him. The sense of the instructions was clear. Balchen's primary object was to be the destruction of the Brest squadron and any force that might be joined to it. A secondary object was the interception of the home-coming squadron from Havana, a squadron, it must not be forgotten, that would be bringing home the treasure, and of whose readiness to sail reports had just been received both from Oporto and from Sir Chaloner Ogle.

The first definite information that the French were in Cadiz was received in England on September 27th, when the 'Grampus' sloop returned to St Helens and reported that she had fallen in with a Danish ship, bound to Hamburg from Cadiz, which had left the Brest squadron of twelve sail<sup>1</sup> at anchor in that port having captured the 'Solebay,'<sup>2</sup> one of our frigates cruising in the Straits, besides several Dutch vessels laden with British provisions and stores. At the same time a letter was received from Admiral Rowley, who had then recently relieved Admiral Mathews in command in the Mediterranean, informing the Duke of Newcastle that he was bringing the main body of his squadron to the westward and closing upon the Straits' mouth in consequence of the preparations at Carthage and the motions of the French from Toulon. The centre of gravity of the Mediterranean maritime operations was being transferred from the Gulf of Lyons and the west of Italy to the Straits of Gibraltar, and there seemed at this moment to be every indication that a great concentration of the whole French and Spanish fleets was about to be made at Cadiz. A further set of instructions was therefore hastened out to Balchen, informing him that Rowley was coming to the westward of Gibraltar and directing him to "concert

<sup>1</sup> This was de Nesmond and Rochambeau combined.

<sup>2</sup> The 'Solebay,' Captain Bury, had been taken on August 6th. She had been detached by Osborn from Lisbon on July 16th, the day he had arrived there, to get information of the French about St Vincent, with orders to return to Lisbon directly she could obtain any. She went off St Vincent on the 17th, was chased 300 miles west from Lagos on the 30th, returned to her station having shaken off her pursuers, but sighted another French squadron of seven ships at 4 A.M. on the 6th August, who chased her a day and took her when she attempted to slip back through their squadron after dark. Captain Bury was tried by Court Martial for the loss of his ship. Although the enemy were seven to his one it was held that he ought to have fired upon them—which he did not do—in hopes of disabling one of them at least: beyond that his actions were judged correct. He was mulcted one year's pay. Court Martial on Capt. Bury. In letters. Osborn had put to sea with the convoy on August 4th, but learning that the French fleet was off the Rock of Lisbon, he returned to harbour.

with him [Rowley] proper measures for the junction of your squadrons, and when joined you are to take him under your command."

The instructions give a better indication of the views of the Admiralty as to the situation than any paraphrase of them can do. They run thus:

"But if the Brest squadron is not gone into the Mediterranean, you are not to make any stay at Gibraltar, but repass the Straits, and proceed in quest of them wherever you shall hear them to be, according to the orders you have already received from us.

"If the Brest squadron shall have joined the French and Spanish squadrons in the Mediterranean (of which you will not fail to have notice upon your arrival at Gibraltar) you are, when joined by Vice Admiral Rowley, to endeavour to attack them and to take, sink, burn or otherwise destroy them. And when that service is performed you are to leave a sufficient strength of the fittest and cleanest ships in the Mediterranean under the command of Vice Admiral Rowley and return with the rest to England.

"But if the said combined fleet should be so disposed that you shall see no immediate prospect of being able to attack them it is his Majesty's pleasure that you do in that case immediately return to England, leaving (as is afore-mentioned) a sufficient strength of the fittest ships with Vice Admiral Rowley for the performance of the services prescribed to him by his instructions<sup>1</sup>."

This communication never reached Balchen. On September 9th, when he had taken up his position to blockade Cadiz and look out for the Spanish and French ships coming from the westward, he received a letter from Admiral Grave, the Dutch Commander-in-Chief, in which that officer reported that as the Dutch ships had now only four weeks' provisions remaining and were short of water, a council of war of the Dutch commanders had been held at which it had been decided to part company from the British fleet and return at once to Spithead<sup>2</sup>. This news entirely upset Balchen's plans for watching Cadiz. It left him with seventeen ships to watch a squadron of about fourteen sail of French ships in Cadiz and another six<sup>3</sup> which were cruising at sea in a part unknown. Balchen held a council of war, at which it was agreed to supply the Dutch with some provisions to ensure their reaching England, and to carry the whole fleet home. The provisions were supplied, and on the 14th September the combined fleet left Sparte,

<sup>1</sup> Out letters. Orders and Instructions. September 27th, 1744.

<sup>2</sup> P.R.O. *S.P. Dom. Naval*, 28.

<sup>3</sup> I.e. Piosin's squadron which was known to be out to the westward of St Vincent.

leaving behind them the twenty French ships in Cadiz and at sea. A fortnight later a violent gale in the Bay scattered the fleet and shattered the ships, but all arrived in England in safety except one, the 'Victory' herself, Sir John's flagship. On the night of the 4th October it was said that the firing of guns had been heard, but nothing was ever known for certain of her fate; it was believed that she struck on the Casquets, but the circumstances of her loss were never known. Frigates were sent to search the coast of Guernsey for possible survivors, and wreckage was found there; but of the Commander-in-Chief, officers and crew, eleven hundred souls in all, not one survived to tell the tale of the lonely tragedy.

While Balchen, in consequence of the unexpected diminution of his squadron, was on his way back to the shores he was never to reach again, events in the Channel were interfering with the reinforcement which the Admiralty was preparing to send him. Admiral Davers, who was lying at Spithead about to sail with the squadron under his command and a large body of trade, received intelligence on September 17th that a Danish merchant ship bound to Hamburg from Leghorn, had seen off the Land's End "twenty sail of French ships, some appeared to be merchant ships, the rest from 70 to 60 guns." In consequence of this Davers stopped the trade that had been about to sail, and sent the news to London. Instructions were at once sent to him to take all the ships that were at Spithead to sea and get touch with the enemy. Scouts were sent out, some to search for the enemy's fleet off the Land's End and in the Soundings, others to cruise across the Channel between the Isle of Wight and Cape La Hague and between Portland and the Casquets to watch for their coming up Channel. It was fully believed that this was the Brest squadron, possibly with transports, and that invasion was again imminent. But on the 27th September the 'Grampus' arrived and brought the news that Balchen was blockading that squadron in Cadiz. Orders were therefore sent to Davers to proceed to sea with his convoy—he had been unable to move during the ten days of suspense owing to strong southerly winds—and to carry out his instructions; but Balchen's fleet arriving on the 4th October these instructions were modified and he was ordered to proceed with his own four ships and the trade, the latter numbering thirty-four sail, to the West Indies. Inaccurate information had been the cause of this momentary disturbance. The ships sighted by the Dane were from Martinique, a convoy of merchant vessels escorted by a very small force of men-of-war. The remaining British ships<sup>1</sup> were formed into a

<sup>1</sup> 'Lenox' 70, 'Hampton Court' 70, 'Edinburgh' 70, 'Monmouth' 70, 'Dreadnought' 60, 'Augusta' 60, 'Falkland' 60; also two or three Dutch ships.



squadron under Medley to cruise in the Soundings until November 10th. This was the largest body that had so far been allocated to cruising duty to the westward, and marks a step in the steady advance in the system which culminated in the Grand Fleet to the westward.

Davers did not eventually get to sea until another month had gone by, his convoy increasing while he waited from 34 to 61 sail. Medley escorted him 100 leagues into the sea and then returned to Spithead with his squadron, and was at once sent to sea again, with instructions to meet a convoy of some 80 sail returning from Portugal under the 'Saphire,' to endeavour to intercept some homeward bound French East India ships coming from Louisbourg under the escort of three or four men-of-war, and to protect the trade generally<sup>1</sup>, remaining at sea until the end of the month—a cruise subsequently extended until the middle of January. His rendezvous was 100 leagues S.W. by W. from the Start.

Medley took his ships to sea to carry these instructions into execution, and cruised in the assigned station. On December 29th a portion of this squadron, consisting of four ships under Captain Thomas Griffin<sup>2</sup>, parted company in bad weather. Early on the morning of January 7th, 1745, this division which was then standing to the S.W. sighted three ships a great distance off to the N.E. Course was at once altered towards them and sail was made in chase. The enemy was gradually overhauled, and they appeared to Griffin to consist of three merchant vessels of which two were large and one small. At noon the small ship bore away to leeward and Griffin, being the leewardmost of his squadron, stood away for her, and after a chase in which he ran out of sight of the remainder of the British ships, he took her. She was the 'Mars,' a captured British privateer which had been commanded by a well-known privateersman who went by the name of Commodore Walker. She had been taken by the ships with whom she now had been in company, which were two French ships of the line, the 'Neptune' 74 and 'Fleurion' 64. While Griffin was thus pursuing a small and comparatively valueless prize, the remainder of his squadron continued its chase of the two large French ships. The 'Sunderland' dropped out of the chase shortly after noon owing to her main topmast going over the side, and by dark that evening the 'Hampton Court' alone was in close touch with the enemy, the 'Dreadnought,' on this occasion a sluggish sailer, having dropped about six miles astern.

In this situation Captain Mostyn, commanding the 'Hampton Court,' who had now clearly made the chase out to be two large men-

<sup>1</sup> Out letters. December 10th, 1744.

<sup>2</sup> 'Captain' 70, 'Hampton Court' 70, 'Sunderland' 60, 'Dreadnought' 60.

of-war, backed his mizen topsail to allow the 'Dreadnought' to join him, for the two French ships had kept close together and he saw no prospect of engaging them singly. The 'Dreadnought' came up between 7 and 8 P.M. Mostyn hailed her and informed her Captain that as he was now sure the Frenchmen were men-of-war his intention was to follow and engage the larger next morning with the 'Hampton Court,' while the 'Dreadnought' should engage the smaller. The chase continued all night, but the 'Dreadnought' being unable to keep up, although she kept abroad all the canvas she could carry, was again some three or four miles astern when day broke.

A stiff and squally breeze was blowing and the English ships lay over to it so that their lower deck gun ports were under water<sup>1</sup>. The French were stiffer and stood up better to the breeze, and when Mostyn got up to within musket shot to windward of the enemy none of his guns could be elevated enough to carry even at close range. The position therefore in which he found himself was that he was opposed to two French ships of apparently about 70 guns each which could fight their whole broadsides, while he could fight one tier of guns only and these would carry no more than half a cable. The enemy kept close together and there was no possibility, in his estimation, of engaging them singly, and he therefore decided to hold off and wait for the 'Dreadnought' to come up once more.

The 'Dreadnought' came up about 11 and the two captains consulted as to what they should do. They agreed that it would be exceedingly rash to engage the enemy with one ship only, and that therefore the best thing to do was to keep them in sight and engage when a favourable opportunity presented itself. The opportunity was not however given. The chase continued till dark, the French steadily gaining every hour until they were at length lost sight of.

The affair caused much outcry, and Mostyn's conduct was severely criticised, in particular by Vernon both in the House of Commons and in a pamphlet<sup>2</sup>. Mostyn, at his own request, was tried by Court Martial. He was unanimously acquitted of the charges of misconduct. Griffin, the senior officer, received no blame for having gone after the smallest ship as it was considered that in view of his position to leeward and his opinion at the time he bore up that the strangers were merchant ships, he was justified in following her. It must however be observed that Griffin's eyesight appears to have been less keen than that of Captain

<sup>1</sup> The Captain of the 'Sunderland,' who was some miles astern but could see all the ships clearly, remarks particularly in his journal how heavily the English ships "lay along" and how upright the French stood.

<sup>2</sup> *The Case of Captain M*——. Written probably by Vernon.

Brett of the 'Sunderland,' who was convinced from the beginning both from the way in which the enemy sailed and from their appearance that they were men-of-war; and he expressed this opinion a full hour before Griffin bore away to leeward after the 'Mars.'

The squadron returned to Spithead after this episode, Medley's ships doing the same in the middle of January. Although nothing striking had been achieved in these two months the period is not without importance as it marks the beginning of the re-establishment of the cruising squadron to the westward<sup>1</sup>. The failures of the last nine months, since France came into the war, had been principally due to the lack of such a squadron, unhampered by duties of convoy. Owing to this error, the Brest ships had been able to get to sea, had first taken many prizes in the very chops of the Channel, had then almost starved Gibraltar, and by holding up Mathews's supplies had as nearly as possible driven him from the Riviera.

The succession of events which had marked the voyage of the victuallers to the Mediterranean is very striking and furnishes a comparison between the direct tactical protection of the trade by convoy with the indirect or strategic protection afforded by blockade. Owing to the enemy being able to get to sea unlocated, successive additions to the convoy had to be made until it rose from the two ships—'Roebuck' and 'Preston'—originally appointed, to the whole British and Dutch fleet of twenty-five ships of the line. When this force left England the locality of the French was still unknown, and so long as the main Brest squadron was unwatched there was no security for the kingdom. A strong force off Brest, untrammelled by trade, would have minimised the delays which so seriously affected affairs in the Mediterranean, the uncertainty that prevailed at home and the freedom of the French squadrons.

As the disadvantages of St Helens' as a point of departure for the large squadrons were now recognised, the base of the western cruisers was transferred to Torbay and Plymouth. The system which now began to take permanent shape was based on a strong cruising squadron regularly maintained to the westward and tending to become more and more independent of escort duty. To seaward of it the trade was carried by convoys to which the squadron served as the essential shield. The drawback of using one and the same force

<sup>1</sup> "Look back to the latter end of the reign of Queen Ann when we had well-conducted western squadrons, with a proper latitude in their orders, and it will be found the trade was well protected, the enemy's privateers suppressed, and some detached to proper stations that distressed the enemy's trade at the same time; and were in the best stations with the main body for protecting all these Kingdoms from invasion." Vernon to Admiralty, November 24th, 1745.



to protect the trade and deal with the enemy's fleet had been experienced more than once during this war, yet it was not until the end of the year 1744 that the necessity for observing a difference of function received recognition. The difference had been well and succinctly put by Tromp in a letter of November 26th, 1652. "I could wish," he then wrote, "to be so fortunate as to have only one of two duties, to seek out the enemy or to give convoy; for to do both is attended by great difficulties<sup>1</sup>." So might Norris have exclaimed in 1740 when he was ordered to escort 150 odd sail of merchant vessels into the sea and at the same time to use all possible despatch to get off Ferrol to prevent the Spanish division from sailing.

It was however many months before a force sufficient for the purpose was maintained to the westward. Ships were needed for cruising services in so many directions, and the demands for convoys were so great, that even though aided by the Dutch the British sea forces were but barely equal to those of France and Spain. The Dutch indeed proved but indifferent auxiliaries. They were months in providing the contingent of twenty ships of war which they had engaged to do by treaty and then withdrew half of them almost immediately. With their cumbrous naval administration divided between five separate Admiralties, all with their own jealousies, the concurrence of each in all projected measures had to be obtained, and delays innumerable occurred. Moreover the Dutch, for some reason which does not appear but which may have been connected with a desire to prevent their ships from being employed far from their own coasts, made no provision for victualling them for long cruises, but filled them up at fortnightly intervals, and consequently they were not available for the extended cruising essential in the western squadron. It was due to this insufficient victualling that Sir John Balchen was obliged to return and leave the French squadron unwatched at Cadiz; and more than once orders were sent direct from the Dutch Admiralties to their ships which caused British commanders suddenly to find themselves deprived of vessels upon whose services they had depended. Again, Dutch commanders not infrequently during these first six months were prone to consider themselves independent of the British Commander-in-Chief. The British Admiralty complained in strong terms to the Secretary of State of this assumption of free action, desiring that the States-General should be requested to give instructions to their Admirals to obey all directions given by the King or the Admiralty and not "to dispose themselves upon other services." On one occasion, for instance, Admiral Grave was desired by the Admiralty to provision his squadron to three months, but this, he replied, he was

<sup>1</sup> *The First Dutch War*, vol. III. p. 80. Navy Records Society.



unable to do; he could represent the matter to their High Mightinesses but even they would be unable to give directions to that effect without an order from all the Provinces.

This unsatisfactory state of things was accentuated on the 17th January, 1745, when the Dutch requested permission to withdraw a part or the whole of their auxiliary squadron, alleging as their reason for this departure from the express terms of the treaty, that the ships were needed for the defence of their own trade from the Powers at war. The Admiralty most strongly opposed the request, and pointed out to the Duke of Newcastle that not only the whole of the auxiliary ships, but also a far greater force of British ships, was required to keep the Channel clear of the ships of war and privateers of both France and Spain, and to protect the coasts of the kingdom and of the Republic. If the Dutch were afraid of attacks on their trade from the Powers at war, the Admiralty most justly pointed out that any dangers would be more effectually obviated by continuing, or even reinforcing, the auxiliary squadron so as to ensure concerted action, than by withdrawing it. At that very moment (January 30th) the information received shewed that 15 French men-of-war had left Cadiz on the 23rd or 24th of December, and had been seen off Lisbon on the 9th of January, so that if they were coming to Brest there would then be no less than 30 ships of the line in Brest, exclusive of what might be in the other western ports of France or of any Spanish ships. If therefore the auxiliary squadron of twenty ships, which had only been brought up to its full number twelve days earlier, were to be suddenly withdrawn it would be exceedingly difficult to oppose the force that might come out from Brest: "We apprehend," wrote the Board, "that if anything could induce the enemy to make attempts on our coast or in the Channel, it would be the knowledge of an intention on the part of the States-General to recall the auxiliary squadron just when it is near completion and ready to act: and at the same time too when the enemy has collected together the greatest force in these seas that they have had during the war."

In spite however of these protests the States-General insisted on recalling half their squadron—ten ships—and at the same time gave no assurances that they would make arrangements for victualling the remainder so that they could be depended on for service wherever and whenever they should be required<sup>1</sup>.

Thus the year 1744 ended and the new year began with affairs in home waters in a precarious state. No notable disaster in the strategic sense had marked the campaign in the Channel and Bay, but neither

<sup>1</sup> See also p. 155 for a state of our squadrons and the duties required of them June 1745.

had any success been achieved beyond the defeat of the attempt at invasion which had been made in the early months of the year. On the continent a vigorous and well-conducted advance into Alsace and Lorraine by the Austrian troops under Prince Charles had neutralised the earlier French gains, and Louis XV had been obliged in consequence to withdraw a large portion of his armies from Flanders and transfer them to the Rhine. This Austrian success was however balanced by the re-entrance of Frederick of Prussia into the war. Fearing that an Austrian success would deprive him of Silesia, Frederick invaded Bohemia in August, a movement which obliged the Austrians to withdraw from their promising attempt to conquer Alsace and Lorraine.

The continental campaign during the year had thus made little progress towards a situation in which peace could be expected. The most promising symptom from the point of view of the allies was a marked weakening in the ties between France and Bavaria; while on the sea the failure of France and Spain to act in cooperation was a factor that was tending greatly to the advantage of their adversaries.

## CHAPTER VI<sup>1</sup>

### OPERATIONS IN THE MEDITERRANEAN IN THE SPRING AND SUMMER OF 1744

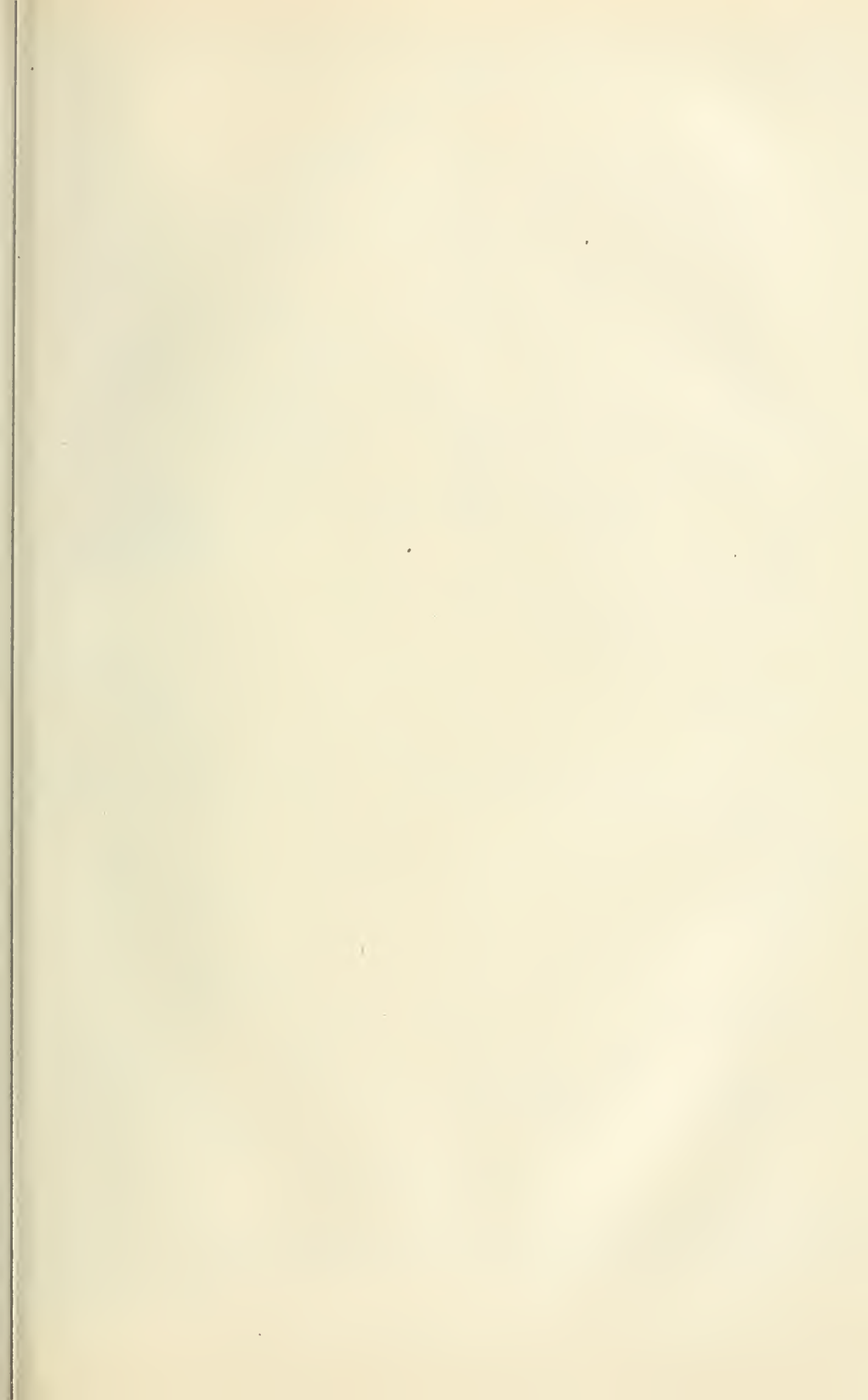
AFTER the battle of Toulon, Admiral Mathews's decision to return quickly to the coast of Provence was balked by the weather. Strong easterly and north-easterly gales, combined with the crippled condition aloft of many of his ships, rendered this impossible. He was obliged to bear up for Mahon, intending to refit as quickly as possible and then resume his station off the coast of Provence. On the 17th February the wind shifted to N.W. by W. and he immediately altered course once more for the Riviera, detaching the hospital ship with the wounded to Mahon and the 'Rupert' and 'Winchelsea' to look into Rosas Bay in case the enemy should have put in there.

The fair wind however did not hold; a few hours later it shifted back to north and blew hard with a heavy tumbling sea, and Mathews, with his eyes on his wounded spars, considered it prudent to bear up again for Mahon. Here he arrived on February 20th and set to work securing aloft as fast as possible, fully determined to regain the coast with the least delay. He sailed again on the 23rd, but another strong N.E. gale drove him far to the southward, and did so much damage to his ships that he was forced back once more to Minorca, where he anchored for the second time on February 29th. The 'Nonsuch,' 'Antelope' and 'Dartmouth' however returned to the coast, and going straight to San Tropez blockaded that port, where 14 large transports with troops on board were preparing to sail for St Hospice with the object of taking Villefranche in rear.

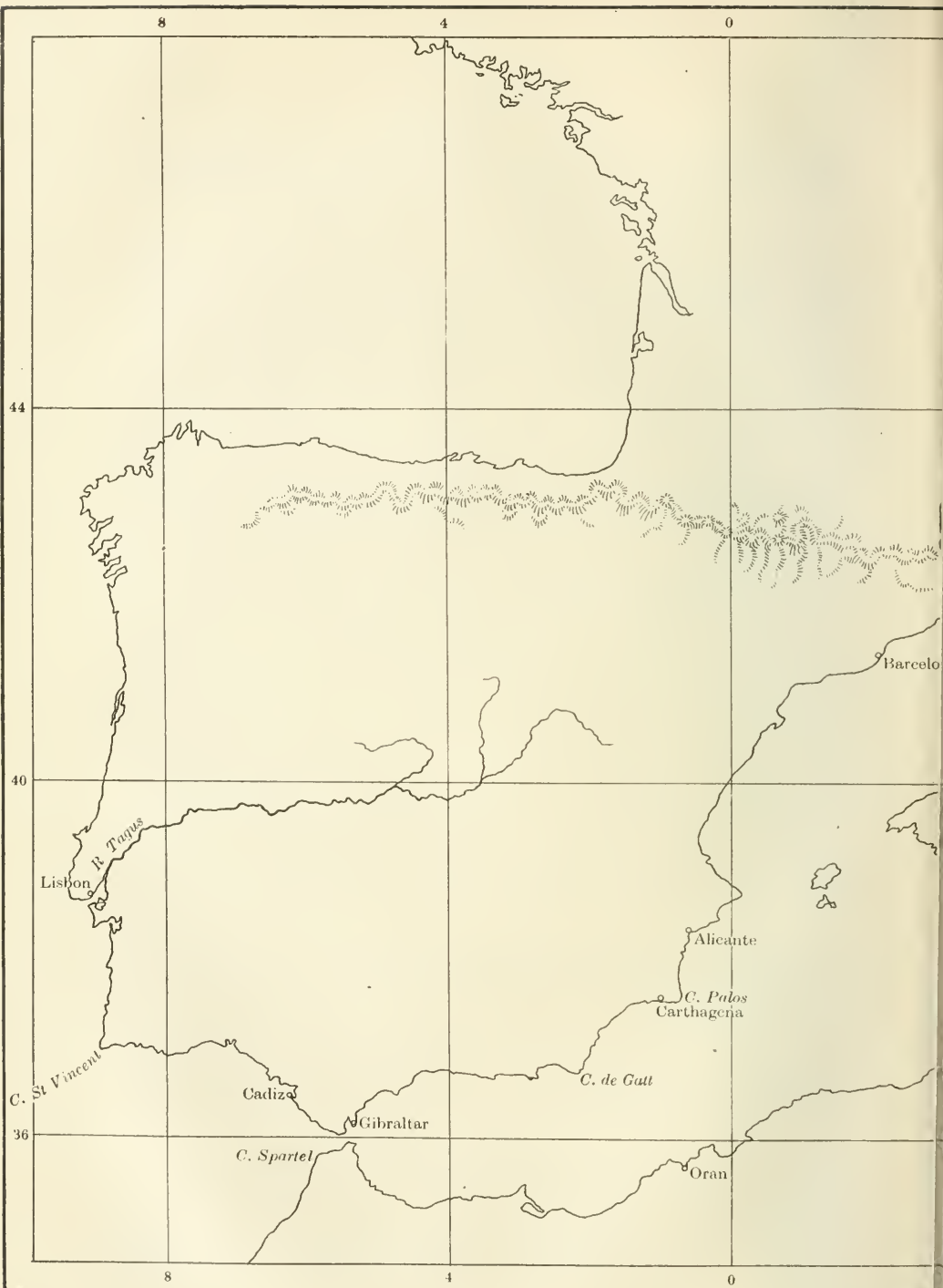
The succession of northerly gales that had held ever since he last saw the enemy gave Mathews assurance that the main fleet could not have worked back to Toulon or to the Genoese coast. He thought it most probable that they had taken advantage of this wind to go to Cadiz, where in all probability they would have effected their junction with the Brest squadron. If they should have done this he considered the refit of his ships at Mahon to be the first and most essential step.

<sup>1</sup> "The main authorities for this chapter are:—

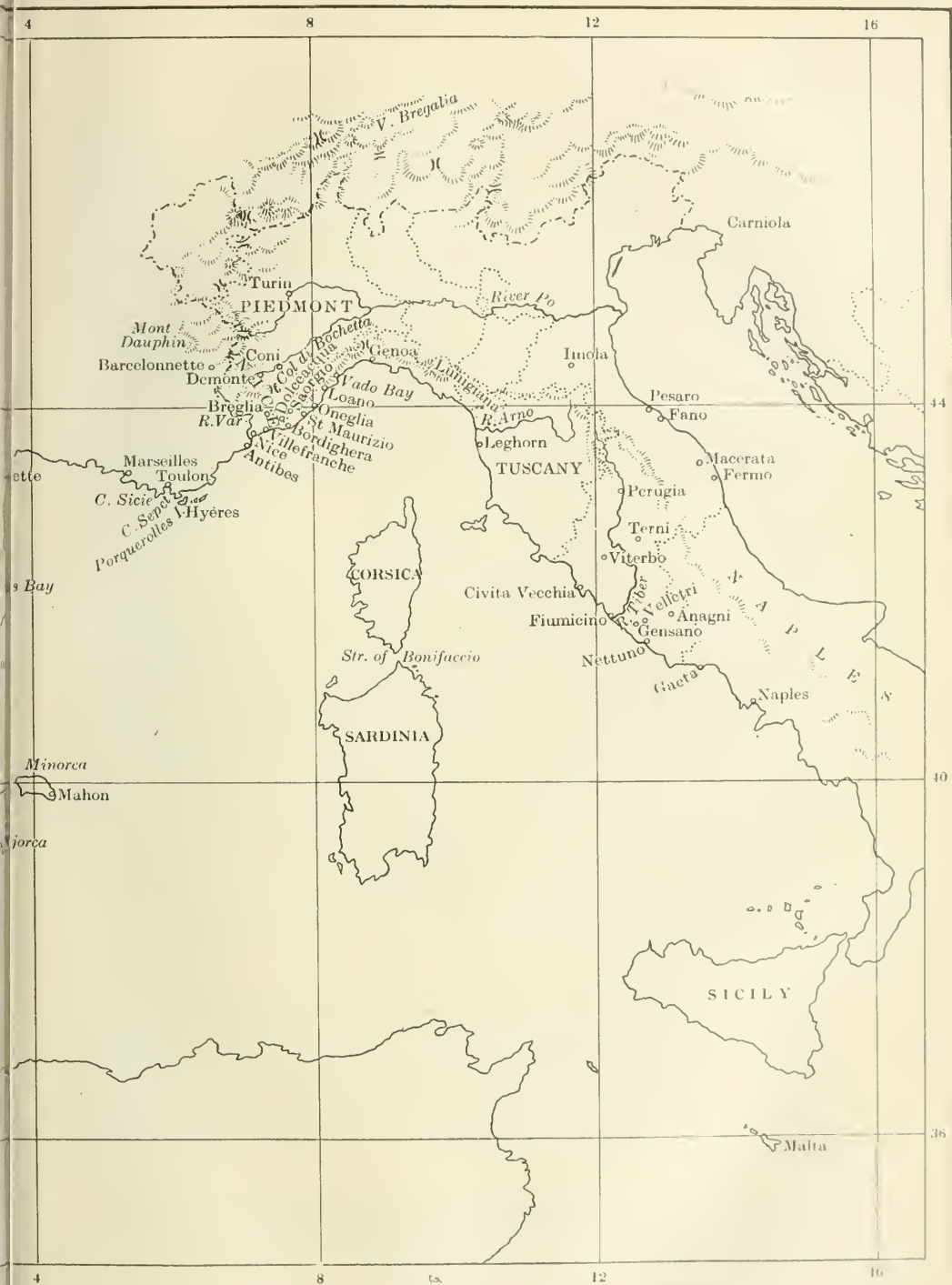
In Letters. *S.P. Dom. Naval* (for correspondence with Duke of Newcastle). *S.P. Foreign, Tuscany* 48, 49, 50. *Savoy* 48, 49. *Genoa* 19, 20. Journal of Admiral Mathews. Logs of 'Namur' and various ships. Pajol (*Guerres sous Louis XV*). Colin (*Campagnes du Maréchal de Saxe*). Lacour-Gayet (*Marine Militaire de la France sous Louis XV*). *London Gazette* for 1744. Carlo Botta (*Storia d'Italia*). *Archives de la Marine* (Paris).

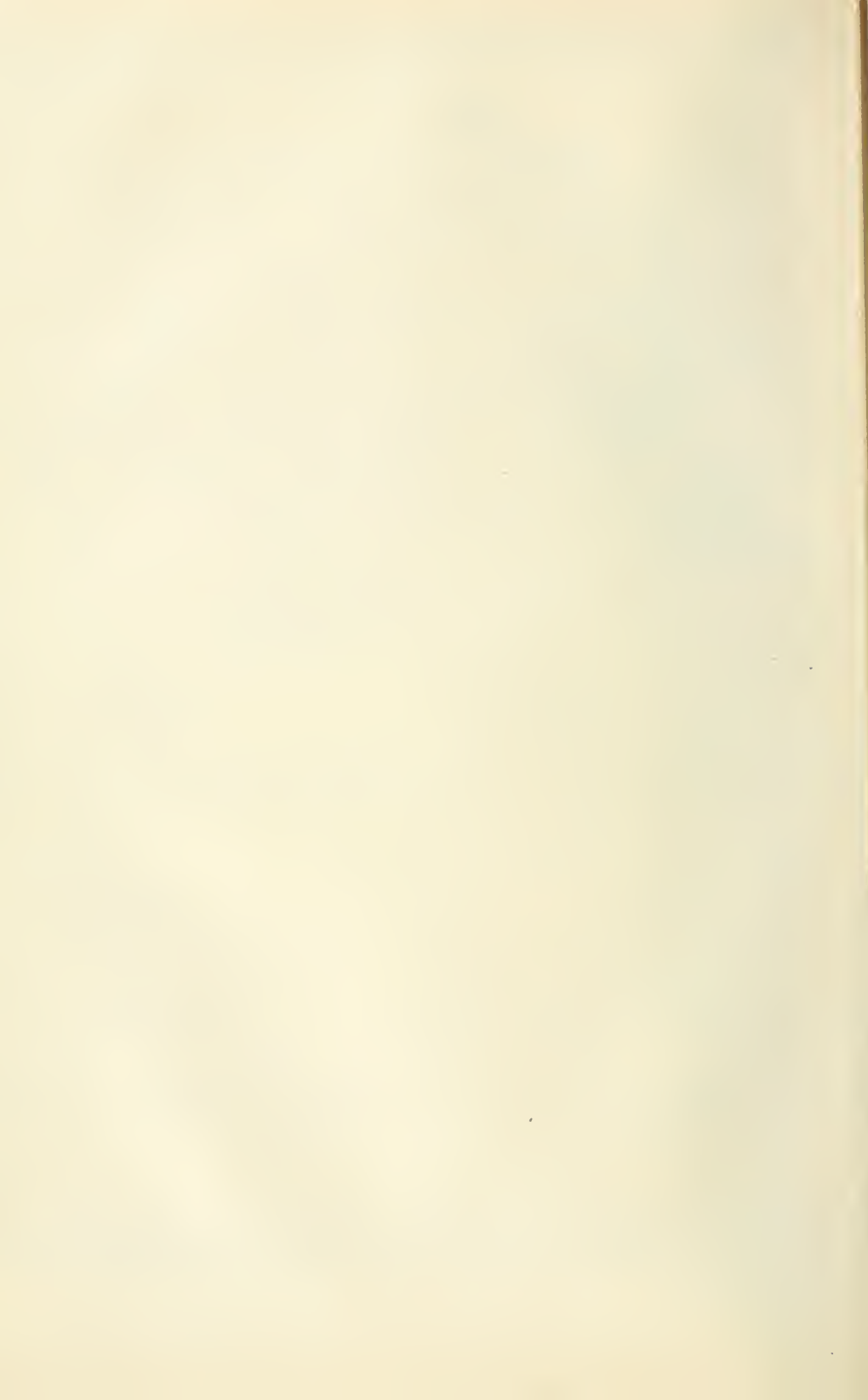






THE WESTERN BASIN





It was not until well into March—in a letter from England dated March 3rd—that he first received the news of the real destination of the Brest squadron and the part it had played in the attempt to invade from Dunkirk. A fortnight later he received the further information that France had definitely thrown off the mask, and that in all probability another invasion would be attempted<sup>1</sup>. As de Court might now have orders to join the Brest squadron to support such an attempt, Mathews was told that if the French passed out of the Straits he was at once to detach a superior force to follow them wherever they should go; if they went to Cadiz, he was to blockade them there; if they went to Brest the detached squadron was to proceed at once to Spithead, sending the information home with the least delay by a small ship; but Mathews himself was desired by the King to remain in the Mediterranean to continue the conduct of the maritime part of the allied operations.

Luckily, before these orders reached him Mathews received information from Captain Fox of the 'Antelope' that the French, to the number of 21 sail, had been sighted in Alicante Road. This gave him something definite on which he could act. A levanter had been blowing, and if the enemy had intended to go down the Straits they would have taken advantage of it. That they had not done so made it probable that they intended either to remain near Carthage and operate in conjunction with the Spaniards, or return to Toulon. As a precaution against their passing the Straits unsighted he sent instructions to Captain Crookshanks, the senior officer at Gibraltar, to cruise up the coast and in the Straits and give information of what the enemy were doing so soon as he could get it. The refit of the ships at Mahon was hastened by all possible means in order to enable them to return to Toulon and prevent the French from getting back to their harbour<sup>2</sup>, and also to oppose the passage into Italy of the troops which he heard were actually ready to sail<sup>3</sup>.

The refit was a slow process on account of the shortness both of stores and artificers<sup>4</sup>, and it was the end of March before Mathews was ready for sea. Even then it took some time to get his large number of ships out of Mahon harbour owing to the lack of conveniences for warping, a lack which he had pointed out nearly a year before; he had then recommended that transporting anchors and chain moorings

<sup>1</sup> Duke of Newcastle to Mathews, March 16th, 1744.

<sup>2</sup> Mathews to Villettes. *S.P. Foreign, Savoy and Sardinia*.

<sup>3</sup> He received this information on March 27th. Mathews to Duke of Newcastle, March 28th, 1744.

<sup>4</sup> Mathews to Duke of Newcastle, March 13th, 1744.



should be laid down at the harbour mouth for the purpose, but the proposal had been negatived by the Navy Board<sup>1</sup>.

The fleet having at length got to sea made the land at Cape Sicie on the evening of March 30th. A heavy gale from W.N.W. came on that night in which the 'Princessa' lost her main and mizen masts. All next day the ships lay to under a foresail and mizen, driving hard to leeward. At 9 A.M. on April 1st, the flagship was close in off Antibes, whence some shot were fired at her from the castle and fascine batteries along the shore. Throughout that day the westerly gale continued, and by the evening Mathews had been driven about eight miles to leeward of Villefranche. Fresh gales with hard squalls, thunder, lightning, hail, rain, and a heavy sea continued until the evening of April 2nd; then the wind fell, and in the light winds that followed the squadron worked some distance to the westward; but a violent gale springing up again at daylight on the 4th put several of the ships in great danger. The 'Norfolk,' 'Torbay,' 'Barfleur' and 'Boyne,' unable to weather the land, were obliged to anchor and in that situation nearly dragged on shore.

Mathews was rejoined off San Remo on the 4th by the 'Elizabeth' and 'Dunkirk,' which had anchored in Hyères Bay on April 2nd, and from them he received the most distressing news. At 5 P.M. on that day these ships had seen the whole French squadron, fifteen sail in number, run into Toulon harbour before the very gale that had driven him to the eastward. He had missed intercepting them by a bare three days! "I have been extremely unfortunate," he very truly wrote, "for had it not been for that extremely hard gale of wind I should have been between them and their port." It was indeed a stroke of ill-fortune, but it cannot be forgotten that the chance of destroying the enemy after the 13th February had been given to him and he had missed it.

Strong gales continued for some days during which the squadron kept continually wearing under reduced canvas and managed to gain some ground to windward. On the 7th the Admiral was joined by the 'Hester' rowboat, from whose Commander he learned that the Spanish advance into Italy had begun. He therefore struck his flag and went ashore at Villefranche to consult with the Sardinian Commander, the

<sup>1</sup> On receipt of the refusal Mathews wrote with some sarcasm. "To be sure their officers, though bred from their infancy to a quill are much abler judges of what is wanting for the good of the service than Admirals and sea-officers who have experienced the want of them." With the wind at E.S.E. the fleet was got out of harbour by towing out one ship with all the longboats, and hauling out the other ships to her by hawsers, lying to her stern while they stowed their anchors and made sail. The loss of a large number of longboats in the battle was a great hindrance to the operation on this occasion.

Marquis de Suse, whom he found in urgent need of help. Nice had fallen, the enemy were already beginning operations against the Castle of Montalban, the principal work of defence of Villefranche, and the Marquis desired the Admiral to bring the fleet into harbour to assist in the defence. This Mathews would not do. The wind now was from S. and S.S.E. and he could not risk taking his ships into a harbour in which, if the enemy forced the passes, he might find himself caught, unable to get to sea and open to destruction from batteries which the army could erect on the surrounding heights.

The combined French and Spanish armies in Provence had begun their advance on the 13th March. This was later than had been intended, as the enemy, fearing an attack upon Toulon by the British squadron, had been occupied in completing their coast defences. Mathews had not then regained the Riviera, but some of his small craft were on the coast; these however were unable to do more than annoy the enemy in their passage across the Var, which was begun at midnight on the 20th and completed by the afternoon of the 22nd<sup>1</sup>, when the army moved on Nice, whither the Marquis de Suse had retreated after having been driven out of Antibes. Nice quickly surrendered. The Sardinians fell back on Villefranche, and here Mathews found them when he returned from San Remo, with the French and Spaniards already beginning their approach upon the defences.

Villefranche was strongly fortified. Mathews had previously landed a number of cannon from the 'Roebuck,' and the fort forming the left of the line of entrenchments armed with many of these cannon had been named "Fort Mathews" after him. From there the defences stretched round and enveloped the Castle of Montalban and Villefranche itself. The enemy began operations by surrounding the place in order to cut off the retreat of the garrison, and prevent the main Sardinian army, which, under the King, was holding a position at Sospello, from relieving the place.

The attacks began on April 2nd. On the evening of the 7th the Sardinian outposts were driven in and on the night of the 8th a general assault was made from Montalban to Castellet, beginning on the Nice side. At daylight the enemy had obtained possession of a large portion

<sup>1</sup> Log of 'Spence,' sloop, March 22nd. "Stood in close to the River Var and saw the Spanish army in march towards Nice; at half-past 9 fired ten 4-pounders and a half ditto at the troop of Spanish horse and foot which obliged them to quit the field. At noon tacked to the westward and fired six 4-pounders and then half ditto at a breastwork of four guns, while they fired several shot over the hull without doing any damage. At 2 p.m. joined company with the 'Rochester'; at 4 stood in to the shore between Nice and the Var and fired seventeen 4-pounders as did the 'Rochester' and several more at a large party of Spanish horse which were riding full speed towards the city of Nice. At 5 stood off from the shore."

of the defences, and, descending from Montleuze they attacked the Sardinian right and the Castle of Monte Rosso. Here they were repulsed. Next morning they made a furious assault upon the batteries protecting the approaches to Villefranche, ending in capturing them together with the Marquis de Suse and about 1200 troops. A gallant counter-attack by the Piedmontese regained the positions that evening, but at the cost of such heavy losses that they could not hold them. They had done all that lay in the power of soldiers to do. The loss of the batteries meant the loss of Villefranche and the exposure of the whole Piedmontese army to destruction. It was therefore resolved to withdraw the garrison by sea, leaving detachments amounting to some 400 men with a supply of provisions, ammunition and stores ample for a sustained siege, to hold the citadels of Montalban and Villefranche, while the remainder were brought down to a fleet of transports which lay ready in San Soupires Bay to take them on board. Mathews, who had spent the night of the 8th ashore watching the assault and conferring with the military commander, returned on board early on the 9th and made all preparations for the embarkation. A body of 450 men under Lord Forbes was put ashore to assist to cover the operation, and the 'Rupert,' 'Leopard,' 'Guernsey,' 'Chatham,' 'Dartmouth,' 'Kennington,' 'Spence' sloop and a fireship were moved close in shore and moored with springs on their cables to bring their broadsides to bear upon the shore. The operation was conducted with such success that in the whole of the last day's retreat, including the embarkation, only 650 Piedmontese were taken prisoners<sup>1</sup>.

Thus Villefranche was abandoned—a battered remnant of a fortified place with all its guns spiked. Its citadel however was still held by its well equipped garrison. Against this success the Spaniards had to set the loss of over 6000 men, a check far more serious than they had anticipated. "We must have been very unfortunate," wrote a Spanish officer, "not to have been able to beat about 5000 men with 20,000 which we had upon that service. Admiral Mathews's fleet is at anchor before that town, which will render our passage into Italy very difficult<sup>2</sup>." Indeed the combination of the heavy losses and the presence of the squadron threatened to stop the advance altogether.

Escorted by the frigates of the squadron the transports sailed to Porto Maurizio; here the troops were landed on the 16th and 17th of April, and proceeded to secure themselves at Oneglia. Mathews, after superintending the embarkation, carried the bulk of the fleet back to Toulon to cover the passage of the troops from interference by the

<sup>1</sup> I have been unable to find out details of how this embarkation was effected.

<sup>2</sup> Letter from a Spanish officer at Nice, April 20th (N.S.). *London Gazette*.

allied fleets, but finding no sign of movement he returned to Vado Bay with the dual object of assisting to check the advance of the enemy, if it should be continued through the Riviera, and of obtaining supplies for his fleet. By now this matter of supplies was becoming an anxious one. His ships, it will be recollected, were provisioned only until April, and so far he had not even any news of the much needed victualling fleet which should have left England in February.

The facts connected with the non-arrival of the victuallers, and its possible effect upon the campaign in Italy, furnish a striking picture of how intimately the various theatres of the war were linked together and of the interdependence of the naval and military forces in such widely separated areas as the Channel and the plains of Lombardy.

The system on which the Mediterranean squadron was supplied was by successions of fleets of transport ships from Déptford, hitherto sent out under the convoy of one or two men-of-war. Haddock's anxiety for one of these convoys in 1741 will be remembered, and on several occasions during the war the Commanders-in-Chief in the Mediterranean had anxious moments concerning the arrival of their supplies, which affected the movements of the squadron. On this occasion the various causes which delayed the sailing of the convoy with Mathews's supplies have already been described.

As early as February 23rd, when he put into Mahon after the battle, Mathews had written expressing concern about the victuallers. "I cannot help saying," he had written, "that my heart akes for fear of their being intercepted, and nothing is more certain than that the conjunct fleet are gone down the Streights...How long I shall be able to continue on the coast of Provence and Italy entirely depends upon his Majesty's commands and the intelligences I shall receive of the conjunction of the squadron from Brest with that of Toulon and of the station they keep in, for I can never think of letting them continue between me and my provisions. Let the consequence be what it will I must not risk starving, for I know not where to go to find flesh, pease and oatmeal for 16,000 men but by separating the squadron and sending some ships to one port and some to another...My intelligence from Paris tells me that the intercepting the reinforcement designed to be sent me with the victuallers is one of their principal schemes. A better they cannot possibly have, as their success will answer all their others without risking the chance of a battle tho' they have a superior force to us<sup>1</sup>." On March 13th, when he learned for certain that the victuallers had not sailed, he again wrote, stating that the delay had already begun to

<sup>1</sup> In letters. February 23rd, 1744.



distress the squadron; on April 4th he reported that he had now been obliged to put the ships' companies on short allowance and that he was in great need of "all kind of necessaries to such a degree that I have neither rest or peace of mind, dreading the fatal consequences that the distressed condition the fleet is in may occasion to his Majesty's service<sup>1</sup>." Beef and pork were his greatest need. Bread, wine, oil and rice to take the place of pease, he could obtain locally, and he hoped he might get cattle in Piedmont through Villettes, to be embarked at Vado Bay. In reply to his letters the Duke of Newcastle had assured him that the transports would now not be long in sailing, and had directed him in the meantime to fill up with provisions and ordnance stores wherever he could get them, in Minorca or Piedmont; an amiable but ineffective answer: for, though the transports sailed not long after, they went as we have seen to Lisbon only, while the storehouses at Mahon were depleted, and it then appeared highly doubtful whether Piedmont could supply even the smallest wants of the fleet.

Mathews, so soon as he arrived in Vado Bay, gave the Marquis d'Orméa clearly to understand that his continued cooperation depended entirely upon the fleet's being furnished with provisions. One hundred and twenty cattle was the least number which could satisfy his needs; unless he could have them by the last week in April he must leave not only the coast but the Mediterranean Sea itself to fetch the victuallers and bring them on from Lisbon<sup>2</sup>. His instructions from home had just informed him that they had put into the Tagus, and directed him to order them to come on and to give them convoy, when he judged it possible; but this he was in no position to do. He could not tell what ships France might send to cruise between Lisbon and Gibraltar nor had he any means of discovering. The French and Spaniards had still, according to his information, 24 ships at Toulon<sup>3</sup>, and it was as much as he could do to keep his squadron strong enough to meet this conjunct force and at the same time to provide for the other services of his command. If the Sardinian Government should be unable therefore to provide the supplies necessary, "God knows," wrote Mathews, "what will be the fate of Italy at last. For if I am obliged to quit this coast for want of provisions I leave their Lordships to judge of the consequences that must naturally follow by the French being left absolute master of this coast: for whenever I do leave it we must go one and all, as it will be very imprudent to leave ships (and those so foul) to be

<sup>1</sup> In letters. April 4th, 1744.

<sup>2</sup> *S.P. Foreign, Savoy and Sardinia.*

<sup>3</sup> It will be recollected that five Spanish ships had remained behind at Toulon when the conjunct fleet sailed on the 8th February.

sacrificed to the French, which must inevitably be the case<sup>1</sup>." A few days later when he heard from d'Orméa that the supply of cattle could only be guaranteed for six weeks, he wrote with even greater urgency to the Secretary of State. "To keep the whole squadron here<sup>2</sup> will I fear appear in a very odd light. I am by no means in any condition to execute his Majesty's commands, nor can I annoy the enemy in their trade; and I am greatly apprehensive I shall be at last obliged to go down the Straits, if not to Lisbon, to fetch the victuallers: it is needless for me to inform their Lordships of the fatal consequences such a step must prove to his Majesty's service in general, but in a more particular manner to the affairs of Italy."

The lack of stores at Minorca was hardly a lesser evil than the lack of provisions. Some of his ships were quite unfit for the sea and in need of repairs on an extensive scale—the 'Chichester' and 'Torbay' in particular which he described as "execrable ships"—and the empty storehouses at Mahon could provide no material for the work.

Thus, owing to the strategy employed in the Channel, of which the most prominent characteristic was the omission to form a squadron to watch Brest, the campaign in Italy was nearly ruined. French ships escaping from Brest had been able to sit on the line of communications of the Mediterranean squadron, stop its supplies and expose it to serious danger of being starved out of its position, so essential to the common cause, on the Italian coast.

Though the failure to keep a hold on Brest was the main source of the trouble, there were other contributory causes. Mathews's failure to follow up his action, the Duke of Newcastle's interference in Sir John Norris's campaign with the Brest squadron, the neglect to send out supplies in time to the oversea bases, all had their share in it. But the fundamental cause was the same as that for the whole of the failures of the war—the neglect to dispose the squadrons in a proper manner and to take measures at a proper time. "I do not say," Dr Johnson once wrote, "that everything done by Lord North's Government was wrong: but it was always done at the wrong time." This might also be said of the actions of the Newcastle Cabinet. The correctness of any measure depends upon the moment when it is taken: it is correct at a certain time to take some particular step; a day later, the same step applied to an altered and developed situation may be a wrong one. Many of the acts of the Newcastle Administration would have been right if they had been done earlier, but postponement in their execution made them too late to effect their purpose.

<sup>1</sup> In letters. April 4th, 1744.

<sup>2</sup> He was then off Villefranche.

The neglect to secure Mathews's line of communications did not however produce the ill effects feared by the Admiral, for the enemy found that a disturbance of the British communications did not secure their own. The general advance of the enemy through the territory of Genoa, expected by some, doubted by others,—among whom was Mathews<sup>1</sup>,—did not take place. Although the Spaniards desired to carry the army through the Riviera, the French strongly opposed the proposal<sup>2</sup>, arguing that it could produce a temporary advantage only, for when the snow fell in the winter the troops would be obliged to return to Savoy or Provence, or else be cut off from France altogether. The British fleet prevented reinforcements and supplies from being sent by sea, and the line of communications on shore was too insecure. The Sardinians threatened it throughout its length. The French recognising this, wished first to crush them by invading Piedmont through the passes in either the Alps or Apennines. The Spaniards, notwithstanding the French objections, adhered tenaciously to the plan of advance through the Riviera, and were encouraged in their idea by a successful opening on May  $\frac{3}{14}$  at Breglia, whence they drove the Sardinian troops back to Saorgio, and then advanced on Oneglia. The French however would not alter their views as to the main attack, and relaxed only so far as to cover the Spanish operations by advancing 19 battalions to Dolceacqua. On May 26th the Spaniards appeared before Oneglia which was held by the troops who had retired from Villefranche; and as the subsequent operations of the ships and armies were connected with events in the eastern theatre of the Italian campaign it will now be necessary to return to that part and trace the movements of the armies operating there.

The operations of the Austro-Sardinians and their maritime ally during 1743 had been primarily directed towards keeping the French and Spanish armies in France and Italy from effecting a junction. They had been successful. The end of the year had found the Spaniards driven back to Fano, faced by Prince Lobkowitz with the Austro-Sardinians at Pesaro. In January the Austrian representatives reiterated their request to Mathews to detach a strong body of the fleet for a joint expedition to Naples, but this the Admiral had been obliged to decline to do, pointing out how impossible it was for him to divide his forces at that critical moment when the conjunct Franco-Spanish fleet was preparing to put to sea and there was a chance of a general engagement. Neither deterred by Mathews's refusal, nor convinced by his reasoning, Kaunitz resumed his applications for assistance on behalf

<sup>1</sup> Mathews to Villettes, May 8th, 1744. *S.P. Foreign, Savoy and Sardinia.*

<sup>2</sup> Pajol, C. *Guerres sous Louis XV*, vol. III. p. 54 *et seq.*

of Maria Theresa. He approached d'Orméa, the Sardinian representative, and asked him whether the King of Sardinia, if the assistance of 9000 troops were secured to him for the defence of his own dominions and Lombardy, and Mathews were reinforced with fourteen ships to allow him to divide his force, would consent to Lobkowitz marching on Naples. When d'Orméa asked whence the 9000 troops were to come, Kaunitz airily replied that he hoped to get them from England or by her means<sup>1</sup>; and through the British Minister at Turin, he boldly asked for that number of men or a subsidy in lieu, together with twelve or fourteen men-of-war to cover the sea transport and assist the operations at Naples. He based his claim on Article 7 of the Treaty of Worms, which said, with regard to the Mediterranean operations: "Tant qu'il en sera besoin pour favoriser et seconder ces opérations, et que le danger des alliés et d'Italie le demandera, Sa Majesté le Roy de la Grande Bretagne s'engage à tenir dans la mer Mediterranée une forte escadre de vaisseaux de guerre et à bombes, et de brûlots, dont l'amiral et les Commandants auront ordre de concerter constamment et régulièrement avec sa Majesté le Roy de Sardaigne ou avec ses généraux et ceux de sa Majesté la Reine d'Hongrie qui seront le plus à portée, les mesures les plus convenables pour le service de la Cause Commune."

The Duke of Newcastle not without good reason characterised this demand as "extraordinary and unexpected," and one for which there was neither treaty nor agreement; and matters were for the time adjusted by a proposal that an attempt upon an extended scale should be made to crush de Gages's army by a joint Austro-Sardinian force, after which the efforts should be directed towards the protection of Sardinian territory. This however did not by any means satisfy the angry Queen of Hungary, and she ordered Lobkowitz to attack Naples. Protests from all sides reached her in vain. The King of Sardinia pointed out that he would be left exposed to the joint assaults of France and Spain; Lobkowitz urged that he should assist the Sardinians and secure their position at Lunigiana, for if the Franco-Spaniards attacked both Nice and Piedmont, the energies of the Sardinians must be wholly taken up in the defence of the latter territory. The enemy's advance might then be made through the Riviera: the British squadron would be driven from the coast, and the enemy could move into Tuscany by sea and then Lobkowitz would be between two fires. The British Government protested that they had not engaged in a war of conquest, but a war of preservation.

The order to march on Naples was nevertheless given in April, and

<sup>1</sup> *S.P. Foreign, Savoy and Sardinia*. Villettes to Duke of Newcastle, January 11th, 1744.



the Austrian army in consequence, leaving Fermo moved down to Macerata, whence Lobkowitz wrote on April  $\frac{11}{2}$ , asking Mathews what decision had been made as to naval assistance, without which, he said, it was evident that an attack on Naples would not be practicable. To this Mathews could only reply that France having now definitely joined Spain<sup>1</sup>, and Villefranche being lost he must keep the squadron together for the present till he saw what use the enemy would make of their sea forces. He suggested therefore that a meeting of the representatives of the three powers should be held as soon as possible to discuss the new situation.

In accordance with this proposal a Council met at Vado on April 28th at which Mathews, Villettes, General Sinzan representing Sardinia, and M. de St Germain representing Austria were present. It was pointed out by the Sardinian that an advance in the Alps had already begun which needed all the troops available to oppose it. Sardinia therefore could take no hand in the projected attack on Naples. Thereupon, as Lobkowitz had been ordered by his Queen to begin the operations between the 3rd and 8th of May, the Austrians demanded the immediate detachment of a British squadron to assist him.

Mathews, in answer, could only point out his inability at the moment to spare any large force for Naples. If he should do what M. de St Germain requested, both of his divisions would be inferior to the French at Toulon, while if he took his whole force to assist the expedition he would leave Toulon open. He further objected that lack of provisions prevented him for the present from leaving Vado Bay for any considerable length of time, and, in conclusion, he asked what effect would this expedition have upon Sardinia, whose dangers had been pointed out so clearly by de Sinzan? The interests of each member of the alliance had, he urged, to be considered; and what could be the use of one of them conquering Naples if the other in the north were crushed owing to Lombardy being left unprotected? Mathews, like Sir George Byng on the earlier occasion, exercised all his powers to persuade the allies to act together. He devoted himself to the common cause, and such cooperation as was obtained was through his good offices and diplomacy. Seeing how obstinately the Austrians were set upon their advance into Naples, and how imperative it was that Lobkowitz should have help—for since that general could not disobey the positive orders of his Queen he was obliged to make the advance—Mathews agreed to do all he could to further the scheme if he should find that the naval situation permitted a dispersion of some of his force.

Some action was indeed called for urgently and at once, for so soon

<sup>1</sup> He received the news of the Declaration of War on April 18th.

as the King of Naples learned that France had definitely joined Spain, he had no scruples in violating the pledge he had given to Martin<sup>1</sup> two years previously. Since the sea defences of Naples had by now been considerably strengthened and the British fleet would also be fully occupied in watching that of the allies, King Charles felt that he could break his word with impunity. Thus secure, he despatched his troops to join the standard of the Spanish general in sufficient numbers seriously to compromise Lobkowitz's advance.

The news of this situation reached Mathews on May 9th, eleven days after the conference. He decided to sail as soon as he could to Toulon to find out what was the condition of the French squadron, determining that if he could afford to make a detachment to assist Lobkowitz he would do so. With that in view he sailed with the fleet from Vado on May 13th, and, sending ships to look into Toulon, proceeded into Hyères where he anchored<sup>2</sup>. Here he learned that the French were very active and had no less than 21 ships fitted out, besides four Spanish ships which were in harbour<sup>3</sup>. In such circumstances it was impossible for him to make a detachment to Naples, especially as the positions of the western armies appeared now to indicate a resumption of the advance through Genoa. The French main body was at Nice, the Spaniards were attacking the passes to the east of Villefranche in the direction of Bordighera, and, still more threatening, an army of some 8000 Genoese was assembling in the neighbourhood of the capital. Intercepted despatches confirmed the belief that the advance was to be made, and Mathews's whole attention was now directed towards opposing this immediate danger, whatever might be the outcome of the Neapolitan opposition to Lobkowitz.

As it was reported that magazines were again being formed in the territory of the Genoese Republic, Mathews at once despatched a small squadron<sup>4</sup> under Temple West to cruise along the coast, search for the magazines and insist upon their destruction, using force if necessary. The main body of the squadron was to hamper the advance along the coast as far as possible.

<sup>1</sup> See *ante*, vol. I. p. 215.

<sup>2</sup> All these movements were accurately reported to the French at Toulon. "L'escadre anglaise renforcée de vaisseaux qui étaient en croisière a paru le 27 sur le côté des Îles d'Hyères au nombre de 25 à 28 vaisseaux de ligne et de 10 à 12 frégates, brûlots et autres bâtiments de suite. Les Anglais ont appareillé le 29. Sans s'éloigner beaucoup de la côte dans la journée du 30, etc., etc." Extraits des Nouvelles concernant l'escadre de l'amiral Mathews. *Archives de la Marine*, Reg. B., 56.

<sup>3</sup> Mathews to the Duke of Newcastle, May 21st, 1744.

<sup>4</sup> 'Warwick,' 60; 'Romney,' 50; 'Diamond,' 40; 'Winchelsea,' 20; 'Dursley,' 20; 'Spence,' sloop; 'Enterprise,' barcolongo; a zebek, three bomb vessels and the 'Hester,' rowboat. The last named was under the command of Lieut. G. B. Rodney.

The advance, as we have already seen, was being made by the Spaniards alone. It began on May 25th and the army soon appeared before Oneglia. West's squadron which was anchored off the town opened a hot fire upon the Spanish troops as they approached the entrenchments, but the range was too great for efficient service. The Sardinians, greatly outnumbered, retired with some precipitation from the town, into which the Spaniards marched, but not before West had slipped ashore a party of men from his ships who dismounted and disabled the greater part of the artillery of the abandoned defences—a smart and seamanlike business.

While West was thus engaged, Mathews covered his operations by remaining at Hyères ready to fall upon the Toulon squadron if it put to sea. He kept a small force under Captain Norris of the 'Essex' watching Toulon and intercepting any reinforcements that attempted to pass along the coast. On May 20th this squadron effected a good piece of work. Twenty-six sail of settees and zebecks were sighted in the morning. They were chased at once by Norris and scattered, some running for Marseilles, some for Cassis Creek and Portmion. Norris anchored off Portmion into which twelve Spanish and one French craft had run, and sent his boats in to burn them, but a hot fire from the Spaniards drove the boats off. Warping close in, Norris bombarded the shore from 8 in the morning till 2 in the afternoon to drive off the defenders and then landed 80 marines under cover of the ships' fire, who, though resisted by some 200 Spaniards, burnt nine of the settees and carried off a tenth. The service however was of less value than had been hoped, as the vessels had already landed the ammunition and stores with which they were laden, at Cette<sup>1</sup>.

Wooding and watering under the very nose of the French, his parties landing daily with a guard of about 200 soldiers, Mathews lay comfortably in Hyères Bay for a fortnight. On June 4th he was joined by the 'Alderney,' which brought him the disappointing news that his long hoped-for victuallers were still lying in the Tagus. He also learned that Admiral Hardy who had convoyed them as far as Lisbon had then returned to England; and that he himself had been left by the Government to provide for their further journey. It is not difficult to imagine the feelings of the Admiral on receiving this information. His distress for want of provisions had now become acute. The precarious supplies from Lombardy would not enable him to keep the sea for any length of time, and he now gave way to circumstances and detached four large

<sup>1</sup> *S.P. Dom. Naval.* Mathews to Duke of Newcastle. Also "Extraits des Nouvelles, etc." *Archives de la Marine.*

ships<sup>1</sup> to Lisbon to bring the storeships on. Seeing that of the 21 French ships reported in Toulon, no less than 17 were in the outer Road and apparently ready to sail, and that the force he had with him consisted of 23 ships only, it may well be imagined that he did this with no degree of pleasure. In the west there was still the Carthagena squadron which might appear at any moment, and in the east Lobkowitz was crying for help.

The Austrian general had advanced with his army as far as Velletri where he was now faced by de Gages, who had the advantage of the sea as a line of communication. All the stores for the Spanish army were being carried by water from Naples, and it was desirable at least to break up their convoys. In spite therefore of the difficulties which faced him and the apparent readiness of the French, Mathews at once detached the 'Chatham,' 'Newcastle' and 'Feversham' to cruise between Civita Vecchia and Gaeta to assist Lobkowitz; but at the same time he wrote to the Austrian general and told him that this was as much as he could do. The conjunct fleet, according to his information, consisted of 28 ships<sup>2</sup>. For the present these absorbed the attention of his whole available force, with the exception of the small squadron off Oneglia under West; and he lay at Hyères and cruised off Toulon, keeping a strict watch on the French and by so doing prevented them from moving.

On the 11th June, the situation was relieved by some surprising news which reached Mathews. It was to the effect that the enemy, whose advance had now been carried as far as Loano, had suddenly evacuated the Riviera. This was true. The French objections to the advance through Genoa and the refusal of their Government to act in conjunction with the Spaniards in that rash adventure, had at last prevailed. The plan of campaign had been altered and a joint advance through the passes of the Alps decided upon. The retirement from Oneglia began in the first days of June, and the whole army was moved inland towards Barcelonnette and Mont Dauphin<sup>3</sup>. The evacuation and retirement were not carried out without loss for the Piedmontese troops followed up the Spaniards and a fraction only of their force eventually regained the main body.

The importance of the part played by the fleet is clear. By its presence it had made impossible the advance by the favourable route

<sup>1</sup> 'Princess Caroline,' 80; 'Dragon,' 60; 'Dartmouth,' 50; 'Worcester,' 50; 'Alderney,' sloop.

<sup>2</sup> One of 114, two of 80, four of 74, two of 70, seven of 64, eight of 60 and four of 50 guns. Mathews to Duke of Newcastle, June 6th, 1744.

<sup>3</sup> Pajol, *Guerres sous Louis XV*, vol. III. p. 57. Mathews to Duke of Newcastle, June 11th, 1744.



along the coast, and driven the armies to take the difficult line of the Alpine passes. This in turn reacted to its advantage, for the new situation created by the abandonment of the Riviera route did much to ease the strain upon the British squadron, which no longer had to use so many of the cruisers to prevent the enemy from sending troops and stores by sea. So soon as he was absolutely certain that the retirement was definite and not a mere feint, Mathews seized the opportunity to increase the detachment he had already sent to cruise off the coast of the Romagna to assist Lobkowitz in his operations against Naples. He ordered Captain Long to hoist a broad pendant and to command the entire squadron<sup>1</sup>, with instructions, dated June 24th, to go to Civita Vecchia, get into communication with Lobkowitz and consult with him in what manner the squadron could best be employed to assist in the conquest of Naples. Long's instructions were to give the Prince all the assistance in his power "by employing the ships and bombs in the manner you shall judge most conducive to answer in the most expeditious manner the end of the service you are sent upon, taking, burning, sinking, or otherways destroying during the expedition all ships and vessels of what nation soever laden with warlike stores or provisions of any kind for the service of the conjunct army, or bound to any port of the kingdom of Naples."

Long sailed first for Leghorn where he arrived on the 12th July. Here he saw Horace Mann who gave him his views on the situation. Mann represented that affairs were now at a deadlock, and that the only hope of procuring an advance of the Austrians lay in promoting a rising of the disaffected Neapolitans; but these people were, not without cause, jealous of starting an insurrection without some nucleus of a military force about which to rally, and the hope was a small one.

With this information Long sailed next day to the mouth of the Tiber off which he anchored his squadron on July 14th and at once ascended the river to Lobkowitz's headquarters to confer with the general. The opposing armies, each consisting of between 25,000 and 30,000 men, lay facing each other, the Austrians at Gensano and the Spaniards and Neapolitans at Anagni. Both held strong positions, and the numbers on either side were so nearly equal that neither commander cared to hazard an attack upon the other. The arrival of the squadron however made a difference, as it provided the Austrians with the means of making a diversion and weakening the main body of the enemy.

<sup>1</sup> 'Nonsuch,' 50; 'Leopard,' 50; 'Antelope,' 50; three bomb vessels and their tenders, three Sardinian galleys. The 'Chatham,' 50; 'Newcastle,' 50; 'Fever-sham,' 40; and 'Kennington,' 20, which had previously been detached to cruise between Gaeta and Civita Vecchia, were placed under his orders.

With this object the Austrian general proposed that 3000 of his troops should be embarked and carried down the coast towards Naples, a measure which it was hoped would not only oblige de Gages to make a considerable detachment from his army to deal with this attack upon his base and his lines of communication, but might also serve as the necessary inducement to the disaffected Neapolitans—among whom were several of the nobility—to rise. It was even hoped that so many as 15,000 might be persuaded to join. By these means an opportunity might be made to attack the main Spanish army with superior numbers.

Long at once despatched an officer to Leghorn to hire transports. In addition, he gave direct assistance to the Austrians in the field. Great trouble was being caused by a heavy Spanish battery to which the Austrians, from lack of large artillery, could not reply. Long landed some heavy guns from his ships, raised a battery against it, and completely demolished the troublesome redoubt of the enemy within a few hours. Thus the effects of command of the sea made themselves felt. Temporary command had enabled the Spaniards to transport heavy artillery. Lack of it had prevented the Austrians from doing so. The restoration of it contributed towards securing a valuable tactical success and was now to contribute still further in a wider field.

As soon as the transports from Leghorn arrived the preparations for an embarkation were begun. They were not however completed, for Lobkowitz, learning that the King of Naples was present in person in the Spanish headquarters made the sudden resolution to attempt a night attack upon the enemy's camp, with the direct object of capturing that monarch. On the night of the 31st the attack was delivered. The Spaniards, whose attention was confused by the appearance of the squadron, were completely surprised; the camp was entered, the Spaniards were thrown into confusion and Don Carlos himself most narrowly escaped capture. But the unfortunate propensity of the Austrian troops for pillage ruined the enterprise. Having driven the Spaniards from their position the Austrian soldiery proceeded to loot the town and camp, and thereby gave de Gages an opportunity, of which he skilfully availed himself, to rally his army and deliver a counter attack which turned what had promised to be a victory for the Austrians into something closely resembling a defeat. Such initial success as there had been was largely due to the disconcerting effect produced upon the Spaniards by the presence of the squadron and the transports. "It is certain," wrote Mann<sup>1</sup>, "that to the appearance of his Majesty's squadron and the jealousy it gave the enemy, is totally owing the late success of the Austrians, as the Spaniards were totally

<sup>1</sup> *S.P. Foreign, Tuscany*. August 7<sup>th</sup>, 1744.

employed in observing their motions relative to the embarkation, nor ever suspected that body of troops was designed to surprise their headquarters. This Prince Lobkowitz and everybody allows." Information from Spanish sources confirmed the correctness of this opinion. If the power which the command of the sea conferred had been more fully realised, and the discipline of the troops better, far reaching results might have been produced.

The intention to proceed with the operation that had been planned was not departed from, but bad weather came on which delayed the embarkation of the troops. Hard gales of wind blowing directly on shore not only prevented boat work, but also placed the squadron and transports in serious danger. Many of the latter were obliged to slip and get to sea, and the middle of August was reached before the vessels were reassembled after the gale. The detachment of troops, under the command of General Brown, was at once made ready to embark, and the operation was about to be proceeded with, when the unfavourable results of the campaign in Savoy threw the design into confusion. In that theatre the allied Franco-Spanish army had stormed the great fortress of Château-Dauphin, and following up their success by the capture of Demonte on August 6th, had forced the King of Sardinia to fall back towards Coni as the last place of defence before Turin. In this serious situation—the very situation which Charles Emanuel had anticipated if strength were frittered away in attempts upon Naples—it was necessary to recall as many of the Sardinian troops as possible from Lobkowitz's army in order to be in a position to defend not only the capital but the remaining territory in Piedmont. Urgent orders were therefore sent by the King that two regiments of Grisons and one of Austrian troops as well should be detached at once and proceed *via* the Adriatic and Lombardy to reinforce the Sardinian army in the north.

When this alarming news reached the camp at Gensano a Council of war, at which Commodore Long took part, was held. It was clear that with the diminished army which would remain after these detachments had been made, the invasion of Naples could not be proceeded with; and, so far as reinforcements for Charles Emanuel were concerned, that the route proposed was a bad one both on account of the long marches involved and of the danger to which the transports would be exposed at the hands of Neapolitan galleys. For these reasons it was suggested that the troops should be embarked on board the transports already assembled in the Bay and escorted by Long's squadron to Genoa. Thence by marching through the territories of the Republic, and over the Col di Bochetta they could join the King in a far shorter time.

The curse of a centrally directed campaign in which commanders are not free to act without permission from headquarters, prevented this operation from being conducted immediately. Lobkowitz considered it necessary first to ask for instructions from Vienna as to whether the reinforcement was to be sent, and if so whether it should go as proposed by the King or by the route through Genoa; adding that if the troops were detached the campaign against Naples must be abandoned. Having done this the Austrian commander made ready to act according to whatever the answer might be, keeping the transports ready for either enterprise.

While the general waited for his instructions a change in the naval situation occurred which rendered one part of his proposals abortive. Events in the western basin of the Mediterranean took place, which caused a redistribution of ships on the Italian coast.

At the time when the Spanish invasion through the Riviera was definitely abandoned, Mathews had under his command forty heavy ships. Of this total he had been obliged to detach four ships to Lisbon to bring on the victuallers and he had four other ships at Mahon under repair, leaving him 32 sail of great ships. The French, according to his information, had 24 sail of heavy ships in Toulon of which 17 were ready for sea in the outer Road and the remainder fitting out<sup>1</sup>, while the Spaniards at Carthagená had twelve of the line and four heavy frigates said to be ready. Thus the allied powers had in their two harbours 33 sail of ships to oppose which Mathews had 32, many of which were individually smaller and in a very foul condition<sup>2</sup>, and with these he had numerous duties to perform. The blockade of Toulon and the support of Lobkowitz's campaign had been specially recommended to him by the Duke of Newcastle. Besides this he had to prevent supplies from getting into any part of Italy, to protect his own supply ships passing between the fleet and Sardinia, and other services: "it is requisite," he wrote on June 28th, "always to have someships to perform the other absolutely necessary services, and many they are"; and this can well be appreciated. Yet over and above his heavy ships he had but six frigates—forty and twenty-gun ships. Thus it came that the largest number of great ships he could afford to assemble in one body was 23. With these and a few frigates, he decided to watch Toulon. Considering his information as to the state of the French squadron in

<sup>1</sup> Twenty sail appear to have been actually ready in July. Mathews found it very difficult to get certain information as to the French strength.

<sup>2</sup> Four ships had not been cleaned since 1740, four since 1741, and six since 1742—fourteen very foul ships. Contrast this with the act for convoys and cruisers in 1742 which had recommended that to enable the ships for trade protection to be able to perform their duties properly they should be cleaned every *ten weeks*.



that port this force cannot be considered excessive, but the effect was that there were no ships available to observe Carthagenia.

The necessity for this concentration was further indicated by the information he had that the allies were once more bent on uniting the two squadrons. His presence off either Toulon or Carthagenia would prevent their doing this, but his choice of Toulon as the more important port to watch was an obvious one. So far as it went this information as to the allies' plans was correct, though whether the French were to be joined at Toulon or were to sail and join the Spaniards at Carthagenia is uncertain. The former appears possible from the fact that the French ships were moored by Gabaret across the mouth of the harbour and many of their crews were landed, to reinforce the shore batteries<sup>1</sup>; and all Mathews's intelligence was to the same effect. A letter he received dated June 8th had said that Maurepas had given orders that the combined fleet should attack Mathews as soon as the Carthagenia squadron arrived. One of the 26th said that the British squadron, though it could not attack the French, prevented the Spaniards from joining them<sup>2</sup>. Pajol<sup>3</sup> however says the Minister wished the squadron to sail from Toulon as soon as possible and join the Spaniards at Carthagenia. Whichever was the real intention, the fact that Mathews's squadron was lying in strength off the port prevented the allies from doing one thing or the other, until at last Maurepas, like Napoleon at the end of 1805 in similar circumstances, abandoned the idea of conducting "*grande guerre*" and broke up the Toulon squadron into small divisions with the object of attacking trade, convoys and reliefs—an extension of the system upon which Rochambeau and Nesmond had been working on the coast of Spain.

The organisation of the new arrangement is shewn on the opposite page. According to British doctrine it represents a faulty conception of war. While, in cooperation with other movements, such an attack upon the lines of communication might produce a considerable result, as Rochambeau's operations had already very nearly succeeded in doing, as the main function of the ships of the line it could never produce anything decisive. It is noticeable that from the moment this method of employing the French Mediterranean squadron began, that force ceased seriously to influence the course of the war in Italy. Thus Mathews's determination was rewarded. He had refused to be led into the various small operations which would have weakened his fleet and given freedom of action to the enemy. Detachments he had made

<sup>1</sup> *Archives de la Marine*, Reg. B, 56.

<sup>2</sup> *S.P. Dom. Naval*. Mathews's letters to the Duke of Newcastle, 1744.

<sup>3</sup> *Guerres sous Louis XV.*

*Organisation and Functions of the Toulon Squadrons*<sup>1</sup>.

1st squadron.

M. de Piosin.

Duties.

'Tonnant'	80	} To cruise between Sparte and the African coast, intercept outward and homeward British convoys, attack and protect trade, intercept ships going home from Mathews's squadron which being foul and ill-manned should easily be captured (July 1 <sup>st</sup> ).
'St Esprit'	74	
'Eole'	64	
'Tigre'	50	
'Zephyre'	30	

2nd squadron.

M. de Caylus.

'Esperance'	74	} Proceed to Malta, cruise in the Straits of Malta for a month, then go to Cadiz. Endeavour on his way to attack the squadron detached by Mathews to Naples. Escort any homeward trade as close to Marseilles as he shall consider necessary (Aug. 1 <sup>st</sup> ).
'Trident'	64	
'Sérieux'	64	
'Diamant'	54	
'Aquilon'	42	

3rd squadron.

M. de la Jonquière.

		} Escort trade from Toulon to the Levant; meet the convoy expected to be returning with Caylus (above) and see it into safety. Attack any British ships met with about Malta. Cruise until the end of November and return to Toulon not later than beginning of December. The most important service, if he has no convoy, is to seek detached British ships which will be engaged on protecting supplies to Rowley's squadron from Barbary, Sardinia or Italy. (September 25th/October 6th.)
'Terrible'	74	
'Borée'	64	
'Léopard'	64	
'Alcion'	50	
'Atalante'	30	

Detached division.

M. de Vaudreuil.

'Heureux'	60	} Cruise in the Levant against British privateers or detached ships and for protection of commerce by convoy and cruising (undated, apparently middle of July).
'Flore'	26	
'Hirondelle'	16	

The instructions to Piosin<sup>2</sup>, *inter alia*, run thus:

"He is informed that Admiral Mathews, to whom a reinforcement of four or five ships has been sent to replace those which have been long at sea and are in bad condition, will soon send these latter to England. There is reason to believe that these ships which have been long off the ground will sail ill and that they will be short-handed, as the Admiral will be obliged to retain the best of his seamen in the largest number possible in order to strengthen the crews of the ships, which are lacking. His Majesty expects that M. de Piosin will take every possible step to meet these ships on their homeward journey... and endeavour to take them."

<sup>1</sup> *Archives de la Marine*, Reg. B<sup>3</sup>, 425, ff. 303, 305, 321, 373, 396, 466.<sup>2</sup> *Archives de la Marine*, Reg. 425, f. 303.

where they were absolutely necessary, but he had never lost sight of the principal function of the main body of ships of the line. It had to cover the operations of the detached bodies and allow them to work in security. This it had done; and the French, finding themselves unable to break down the barrier, discouraged possibly by the ineffectiveness of their Spanish allies, were obliged to seek a new line of action.

It was some little time before Mathews got wind of the new intentions of the French, which did not indeed take shape immediately. He had remained off Toulon until the middle of June, when, his provisions being all but exhausted, he had been forced to return to Vado for supplies. Hurriedly embarking the cattle which Villettes had procured for him, some of which he kept for fresh provisions, but the majority of which he killed and salted down in anticipation of a protracted blockade, he returned with the least possible delay to the neighbourhood of Toulon where he arrived on July 3rd with his twenty-three sail of the line. As it was still his expectation that the Spaniards from Carthagenia would endeavour to join the French he kept the bulk of his squadron off Cape Sicie; and stationed a cruising division of seven ships under Captain Hawke between Porquerolles and Cape Sepet, connected with his main body by two linking ships.

Twenty-one sail were counted in Toulon harbour, of which fifteen were ready and six rigging, and reports stated that the whole force was preparing to put to sea. This gave Mathews a substantial superiority and his position was now a very strong one. It was impossible for the French to sail, or for the Spaniards to join them without a battle with his superior force. No disturbance in his plans or disposition was caused by the news, received three weeks after his arrival, that the French intended to send their ships to sea in squadrons of five to cruise and protect trade. His arrangements would fully meet any such action on the part of the enemy, as a correct disposition will in almost all circumstances.

On July 25th the 'Winchelsea' came into the fleet bringing despatches, among which was a letter which gave Mathews, in reply to his repeated requests, permission to resign the command. But as at about the same time an important piece of intelligence reached him which rendered it undesirable for him to leave at once, he did not make use of the favour. This was that the Carthagenia squadron had put to sea. Nine sail strong, it was said to have left its port in the middle of July, and as the long expected attempt at a junction with the French might now be about to be made, the moment was not a favourable one for throwing up the command. There were also other possibilities clearly

open to the Spaniards. Osborn's squadron might now be on its way from Lisbon with the convoy, and this was a not improbable objective of the enemy; but there could be no doubt that the junction with the French was the greater danger, and Mathews declined to be led away from Toulon in a chase of such an uncertain nature as that of the Carthagena squadron would be. He therefore remained in his station until the 11th August, when, receiving definite news that the date of the Spaniards' sailing had been so early as July 11th, and that they were bound to Naples with reinforcements of veteran troops for the Spanish army which were to be embarked at Majorca and Oran, he decided that the principal danger now lay to the eastward, and he carried his squadron back to Vado Bay where he anchored on the 15th August.

Here a new piece of intelligence reached him. Five sail of French ships were reported to have escaped from Toulon on July 31st, notwithstanding his blockade<sup>1</sup>. It was possible that these might be meant to join the Spaniards, if indeed they had not already done so, and the Admiral at once ordered Long to fall back from Nettuno to Leghorn in order to avoid the danger of being crushed by this greatly superior force<sup>2</sup>. This reading of the situation, although actually inaccurate as regards the particular French squadron, was yet a correct interpretation of French intentions. The squadron which had sailed was that of de Piosin which was bound to the Straits of Gibraltar: but instructions of August 17th—the day after Mathews's letter to Long—directed Caylus to sail for Malta with his division, and to attack Long on his way<sup>3</sup>. Mathews at the same time ordered Rowley to take the main body of the fleet to meet the commodore at Leghorn. Having made these arrangements the Admiral hauled down his flag on August 21st, embarked on board the 'Seaford' for passage to Genoa and transferred the command to Rowley who prepared to sail for Leghorn so soon as the wind should serve, with a squadron consisting of 17 sail of great ships.

Three days after taking over the command Rowley received news which rendered a complete reconsideration of the situation necessary.

<sup>1</sup> This was incorrect. They sailed after the British squadron had left Toulon.

<sup>2</sup> Mathews to Long, August 16th, 1744.

<sup>3</sup> "L'Amiral Mathews ayant détaché 3 ou 4 vaisseaux sur la côte de Naples, Sa Majesté se remet au Sieur Chevalier de Caylus de passer dans ce parage avant que de se rendre à Malte s'il juge pouvoir se rendre sur cette côte sans trop allonger sa navigation, et dans ce cas il mettra tout en œuvre pour les joindre et pour s'emparer ainsi que des autres vaisseaux de guerre, corsaires et bâtiments ennemis qu'il pourra y rencontrer." *Archives de la Marine*, Reg. B<sup>3</sup>, 425, f. 396. Instructions such as this give the clue to the French failure at sea during this war.



On August 24th the 'Alderney' sloop arrived in harbour, bringing intelligence from Lisbon that the squadron which Mathews had detached under Osborn to bring the long-delayed convoy on to Mahon was, together with the convoy, strictly blockaded in the Tagus by a vastly superior French squadron, whose strength appeared from various reports to be of from twelve to eighteen sail—the very situation which the Admiral had foreseen might arise if he were obliged to send a small force to escort the victuallers. According to other reports these French ships were intended to return to the Mediterranean to cover the passage of a large body of troops from Barcelona to Naples or some part of Italy. This news gave Rowley a new view of the probable intentions of the Carthagea squadron which, notwithstanding the long time which had elapsed since the date it was reported to have sailed, had so far not appeared upon the Italian coast. He now expected that the intelligence of their coming had been false and that they, and also the French ships which had sailed from Toulon, had gone to join these squadrons outside the Straits. A fleet<sup>1</sup> which he calculated could amount to 41 sail might now be assembling in the neighbourhood of Gibraltar.

It was indeed within the power of the allies to have done this, and Rowley's calculations did not exaggerate the possibility of the position in which he might be placed. If however he could collect the whole of his ships, he would be able to oppose this fleet with one of approximately equal force, since his total force of great ships at that moment numbered forty<sup>2</sup>. These however were scattered; and ten were under orders to proceed to England and had already gone to Mahon to prepare for their voyage home. The first thing therefore was, in his opinion, to go to Mahon and get together as many ships as possible.

The protection of Italy, so far as it depended on the sea, now hinged upon preventing the troops at Barcelona from sailing under the protection of the combined fleet. Rowley therefore wrote to Mann and Villettes, informing them that as the French and Spanish squadrons were reported to be going to Barcelona with the intention of bringing the reinforcements to the Spanish army in Italy, it was now incumbent

<sup>1</sup> Made up as follows:

About 12 French ships off Lisbon.

6 " " " Cape St Vincent.

11 Spanish " " from Carthagea.

5 French " " Toulon already reported to have sailed.

5 " " " Toulon known to be ready to sail.

2 Spanish " " Toulon, known to be fit for the sea.

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Rowley to Duke of Newcastle, August 28th, 1744. *S.P. Dom. Naval.*

<sup>2</sup> Thirty of from 90 to 60 guns, and ten of 50 guns.

upon him to keep all his force united; and he desired that the King of Sardinia might be assured that he would return to the coast of Italy as soon as possible<sup>1</sup>. He wrote in a similar sense to the Duke of Newcastle, at the same time shewing that consideration for the convoy and all that its safe arrival meant to the British fleet was also in his mind. Whether, however, the enemy were intending to destroy the convoy or to transport troops into Italy, Rowley had no doubt as to what was the proper measure to frustrate their design, and both to the Duke and the King he expressed his intention of proceeding to attack the combined fleet as soon as possible.

When Mann learned that the whole British fleet was about to be withdrawn he wrote an almost impassioned appeal to the Admiral to leave some naval force upon the coast. Lobkowitz, not less alarmed, hastily sent one of his officers, Baron Lützwow, to meet the flagship at Leghorn and represent to Rowley how essential it was that naval assistance should be continued. The Austrian Commander had at that moment received such positive orders from the King of Sardinia to send the Sardinian troops back at once to join in the defence of Piedmont that he had decided to act without awaiting further instructions from Vienna. He had therefore intended immediately to embark them on board the transports lying off Fiumicino and send them under convoy of Long's squadron to the frontier of Genoa. But the transports could not move in face of the Neapolitan flotilla of frigates and other armed craft, and the removal of the squadron would thus, as Mann said, quite disconcert the measures for helping the Sardinians. On receiving these strong representations Rowley so far modified his orders as to leave three ships and three galleys for the service of the army. He had barely made this arrangement when the reply to the request for instructions was received from Vienna. This decided Lobkowitz to abandon the attempt upon Naples and to retire to Lombardy with his whole army.

Although in consequence of the weakening of the Riviera squadron the reinforcements for the King of Sardinia could not be sent by sea, there was still a helpful service for the remaining ships to perform. Hampered as he was by between 2000 to 2500 sick and wounded, many ill with Roman fever, Lobkowitz's retreat would have presented great difficulties if there had not been the possibility of becoming independent of such a burden. He therefore asked that the transports might now be used to carry the sick, and that some frigates might escort them up to the Arno and land them there, whence they could proceed by easy stages into the Milanese. This was arranged for, but bad weather so greatly delayed the embarkation that he could not begin his retirement

<sup>1</sup> Rowley to Villettes, August 26th, 1744. *S.P. Foreign, Tuscany.*

until October. Passing the walls of Rome where a few months before his army had excited the wonder and admiration of the people, he now recrossed the Tiber, a retiring host, with de Gages's ever-increasing Spanish-Neapolitan horde hard at its heels, a horde augmented daily by the prospects of plunder. On November 1st he reached Viterbo, on the 8th still fleeing, Perugia. Then only did de Gages abandon the pursuit. Although he had inflicted terrible losses upon the Austrians the Spanish commander was unable to follow up his successes for he had no magazines, his army was in a disorganised state, and winter was coming on. The campaign therefore came to an end. Shortly afterwards both armies went into winter quarters, the Austrians at Imola and the Spaniards at Terni and Viterbo.

The influence of the British Mediterranean squadron upon the campaign in this part of Italy had ceased two months before the armies took up their quarters for the winter. The sailing of Rowley from the Italian coast on September 3rd marks the end of the series of operations which had occupied his predecessor for the past two years. A new phase of the war was now about to begin.

The departure of Admiral Mathews from the Mediterranean closed his career. He returned to England and settled down at Hammersmith until, after Lestock's acquittal, he was himself tried by Court Martial for the failure off Toulon. Few men have received so little recognition of their services as he, few such unmitigated volumes of censure. His stupidity, his ill-temper, his pride and his ignorance, have been the theme for nearly every writer who has dealt with the period of his command. Yet he was neither stupid nor ignorant, as his letters abundantly shew. His power of seeing the combined campaign as a whole and his insight into its military needs were no less appreciated by that excellent soldier King Charles Emanuel, than was the practical capacity he displayed in rendering assistance to the armies, both Piedmontese and Austrian. Throughout his tenure of the command his efforts were centred upon combining the operations of the allies, dispelling suspicions, and avoiding the waste involved in unconnected and isolated expeditions. The task which Mathews had to perform was no easy one, and his difficulties were greatly increased by the strange relationship then existing between the Secretary of State and Commander-in-Chief. The Admiral, as we have seen, received all his instructions regarding the campaign direct from the Secretary of State without their passing through the Admiralty, who were thus ignorant of the orders that were being given. The only means therefore by which the Admiralty were able to judge what force was required in the Mediterranean was by counting up the ships of the enemy—a most misleading method which

omits the necessary corrective of the strategy imposed upon the fleet. This corrective was partially applied in Mathews's letters to the Board in which he described the various services he had to perform and his reasons for requiring more ships than were given to him. But the Admiralty, largely composed of gentlemen with no knowledge of the sea, paid no heed to his representations, and he was in consequence in perpetual difficulties.

On the other hand it certainly appears that though the disadvantages under which he was acting were great, Mathews did in effect take them too much to heart. His tendency seems to have been to accentuate difficulties rather than to see the means of overcoming them. In the campaign of 1718-19, when as a captain he was sent down to Mahon to refit, his letters were marked by his emphasis of the disabilities of the place, and the tones he then employed recur in the letters of his later command. That these defects in administration existed is unfortunately only too true, and Mathews was abundantly justified in pointing them out; but it is an undoubted fact that they assume in his correspondence a greater place than they do in that of his contemporaries.

Mathews's failure to obtain a decision in the battle of Toulon has been allowed to obscure all the good work of the two years of his command. The fact that he served under one of the most incompetent Boards of Admiralty that have ever held office, that the fleet was badly disposed and inefficiently administered, and that the Mediterranean squadron had a highly complicated task to perform have been lost sight of. This incorrect perspective is due to the manner in which naval history has so largely been written; it appears as a record of battles and little more, a record in which the main objects of the war and the measures taken by the commanders to attain them, are left obscure. No man's reputation has suffered more in consequence than that of Admiral Mathews.



## CHAPTER VII

### PROCEEDINGS IN HOME WATERS 1745

#### *Development of the Western Squadron. Trade Attack and Defence.*

THE beginning of the year 1745 found a new Board of Admiralty sitting at Whitehall, with the Duke of Bedford as First Commissioner, and Admiral Anson as one of the members. When this distinguished officer returned from his famous voyage of circumnavigation in June 1744 he was promoted to the rank of Rear-Admiral of the Blue; but owing to the refusal of the then Board to confirm a commission granted by him to Captain Brett in September 1743, he had declined to accept any honour or appointment. In December 1744 the inefficient Lord Winchelsea was removed and a new Board appointed, whose first act was to confirm Brett's commission and to offer Anson a seat at Whitehall. Whether the more strenuous and decisive methods of the western squadron and the greater strategical insight henceforward displayed are directly attributable to Anson's influence cannot with certainty be pronounced<sup>1</sup>; but the coincidence is at least sufficiently noticeable to warrant the hazard that the return to the old methods advocated by Norris was not unconnected with the appearance at the Admiralty of the officer who had formerly had the idea of instituting a society for the propagation of sea-military knowledge<sup>2</sup>.

The campaign in the Channel in 1744 had come to an end with the return of Sir John Balchen's squadron from convoying the victualling fleet to Gibraltar. No signs of a repetition of the attempt to invade the United Kingdom had shewn themselves, and the tendency of French strategy had taken the form of intercepting the supplies to the Mediterranean and attacking British trade. The most important area, the grand point of convergence, of both these organisations lay in the approaches to the Channel.

<sup>1</sup> The Boards were as follows:

Lord Winchelsea	Duke of Bedford
J. Cokburne	Lord Sandwich
Lord Archibald Hamilton*	Lord Archibald Hamilton*
Lord Baltimore	Lord Vere Beauclerk*
George Lee, Esq., LL.D.	Lord Baltimore
Sir Charles Hardy*	George Grenville
John Philipson	George Anson*

The Commissioners marked with an asterisk were the seamen on the Boards. Sir Charles Hardy died in November, 1744.

<sup>2</sup> See Curtis Barnett's letter, quoted in the Introduction

No new Commander-in-Chief had been appointed to the fleet after the retirement of Sir John Norris, nor had any fleet been brought together for service in home waters. But in the beginning of 1745 a regular squadron was at last appointed to cruise to the westward with Plymouth as its base. Admiral William Martin, whom we have hitherto seen as captain of a ship of the line, was placed in command. His instructions, which are dated Feb. 23rd, 1745, will best illustrate the functions of the squadron.

"Whereas we have appointed you to command a squadron of his Majesty's ships to be employed in the Soundings and seas adjacent in order to protect the trade of his Majesty's subjects outward and homeward bound, to annoy the enemy's ships and commerce, and particularly to clear the sea of their cruisers and privateers which squadron is at present to consist of the ships named in the annexed list<sup>1</sup>,...so soon as the four 70 gun ships now fitting out at Portsmouth shall arrive at Plymouth...you are upon the arrival of the said four ships as aforesaid, to hoist your flag on board such ship as you shall think fit, and proceed to sea with as many ships of your squadron as are ready to accompany you, leaving orders in the hands of the Commissioner of the Navy at Plymouth for the rest to follow you where you shall appoint. You are to proceed and cruise with the ships under your command thirty leagues S.W. from Ushant, with a liberty of stretching as far as sixty leagues, when you think it proper to do so, by reason of any advices you may get of the enemy, taking care not to be absent from your first station longer than ten days."

"But whereas we have received intelligence that a great number of French merchant ships are coming home from San Domingo as also others from Buenos Ayres, you are at liberty to extend your cruise still farther southward, and place yourself in a fair way of meeting them: and it is left to your judgement either to send a detachment, or go with your whole squadron on that service, and if you send a detachment, you are to direct the Senior Captain how long to cruise on that service, and when to rejoin you."

"You are to use all possible means to inform yourself from time to time of what is doing at Brest, and in other ports of West France, and

'Lenox,' 70;	'Edinburgh,' 70;	'Prince Frederick,' 70;	'Hamp-	Cleaning at
ton Court,' 70;	'Captain,' 70;	'Princess Louisa,' 60		(Portsmouth.
'Monmouth,' 70 ...	...	...	...	On her way to Plymouth to clean.
'Canterbury,' 60 ...	...	...	...	Fitting out at Plymouth.
'Defiance,' 60 ...	...	...	...	At Longreach.
'Sunderland,' 60 }	...	...	...	Cruising in the chops of the Channel.
'Chester,' 50 }	...	...	...	
'Portland,' 50 ...	...	...	...	At the Nore.

All the ships were ordered to assemble at Plymouth when ready.

if you shall have well grounded intelligence that the bulk of the Brest squadron are not preparing for the sea, you are then at liberty to separate your squadron on different stations according to your discretion, with orders to join you again or otherwise as you shall think fit. But if you shall be satisfied that any considerable number of men of war shall get out of the Port of Brest, and come into the Channel, you are then to return with your whole squadron, calling off Plymouth for orders, and finding none to proceed to Spithead."

[Three paragraphs follow:

To pick up 'Sunderland' and 'Chester' and send them into port to clean so soon as he is joined by two more ships.

To give assistance to all British ships in distress.

To examine ships suspected of smuggling wool from Ireland.]

"It is left to your discretion how long to continue at sea and when to return to Plymouth, and whether with the whole or only part of your squadron, which must depend upon accidents: but we rely on your vigilance and care to keep at sea as long as possible, and to use your utmost endeavours to pursue the enemy, and to take, sink, burn or otherwise destroy them."

"But when you shall be reinforced by other ships which we shall despatch out to join you, we recommend it to you to send back such of your ships as most want cleaning to Plymouth for that purpose, and to continue doing so from time to time, if the advices you receive of the enemy's motions will permit you."

Bedford. Sandwich. Geo. Anson. Geo. Grenville.

Four ships of the Dutch squadron<sup>1</sup> under Admiral Grave were added to Martin's command on March 19th. They had instructions to obey all his orders and to use British ports for cleaning, and were to be looked upon and employed in every way as though they were his Majesty's ships. Supplies however were still arranged for by their own several Admiralties, and the inconveniences, to put it in the least censorious way, attendant on the division of control continued throughout the war<sup>2</sup>. In addition to this western squadron there was another small separate squadron of three ships<sup>3</sup> appointed to cruise under Captain Hamilton. This force was wholly independent of Martin and acted under the directions of the Admiralty. Hamilton's instructions were to cruise off Cape Clear, extending his cruise as far as lat. 44° according to the

<sup>1</sup> 'Tholen,' 64; 'Goes,' 64; 'Assendelft,' 54; 'Brederode,' 54; 'Dordrecht,' 54; 'Edam,' 54; 'Leeuwenhorst,' 54; 'Ramhorst,' 54; 'Prince Friso,' 54; 'Vriesland,' 54.

<sup>2</sup> See *ante*, page 117.

<sup>3</sup> 'Augusta,' 60; 'Falkland,' 50; and 'Saphire.' Captain Hamilton's instructions were dated February 8th.

information he should have of the stations in which the enemy's privateers were to be found, or where he could best annoy them and the enemy's trade. Communication with the squadron was provided for in the following manner. "As it is designed that one ship of your squadron should constantly cruise in sight of, or near, the Cape, you are to leave orders with them for that purpose, and to join her with your whole force once in twenty one days." This squadron continued to act as a detached force until July 25th. It cruised in the appointed station off Cape Clear, sometimes returning to the Bristol Channel. At that date it was ordered to join Martin's flag for the purpose of intercepting a large French convoy, but until then we can consider that the landfall about Cape Clear was protected by this squadron, occasionally reinforced by detachments from the main body when occasion demanded<sup>1</sup>.

When Martin received his instructions he was at Plymouth. He reported to the Admiralty that he then had four ships and a frigate<sup>2</sup> lying in the Hamoase ready for service and in reply was directed to sail so soon as the 'Hampton Court' and 'Prince Frederick' joined him. But for all this urgency to get his squadron away, the question of convoys threatened to delay his sailing. Four days after the order had been sent to him another came directing him to pick up the trade bound to the East Indies, Africa and New England and to carry it 100 leagues to the westward. The order was however qualified by a clause to the effect that if any of the convoys were not ready he was to leave them to Admiral Medley to conduct. This extension of the qualification to Balchen's instructions of July 14th, 1744<sup>3</sup>, marks a further step in this war towards freeing the Commander of the active squadron from the convoy duties which had so seriously hampered its movements in the earlier stages.

Early in March the news was received that a force of ships and transports said to be intended for Canada was preparing at Brest. This information was of particular interest in view of a decision which had just been made concerning the North American colonies. Governor Shirley of Boston had submitted a proposal to capture Louisbourg with colonial troops, and thus remove that ever-present threat to the American colonies and their trade, and this had received the assent of

<sup>1</sup> E.g. on June 26th Griffin with four ships was ordered to arrive off Cape Clear as well to search for a French 70-gun ship reported to have taken an English ship in those parts. Secret Instructions, June 26th. Out letters, 1331.

<sup>2</sup> 'Canterbury' (flag), 'Princess Louisa,' 'Captain,' 'Monmouth,' 'Mary,' galley.

<sup>3</sup> See *ante*, p. 104. Balchen was released from waiting for the Portugal and Mediterranean convoys, but had still those to America to carry with him.



the Government; orders were now actually on their way to put the proposal into execution. It was therefore of the highest importance to cover those operations and prevent any succours from being sent to the garrison. Stringent orders were sent to Portsmouth to hasten the completion of the four ships cleaning there and to despatch them to join Martin at Plymouth, while Martin himself was directed, in instructions of the 17th March, to get to sea without losing one moment so soon as he had at least five ships with him. The order to leave all convoys to the care of the Commissioner at Portsmouth was repeated, and the utmost endeavours were to be used to prevent the sailing of the ships from Brest.

The ships from Portsmouth joined Martin at Plymouth at 10 P.M. on March 20th. He weighed at daylight next morning with seven sail<sup>1</sup>, leaving orders with the Commissioner to send the remainder of the ships to join him at his rendezvous, so soon as they were fitted, and stood down to his station "thirty to forty leagues S.W. from Ushant which I look upon to be the fairest track for them as they will not care to run far southward lest the winds coming westerly should keep them embayed and prevent their weathering Cape Finisterre."

For some days Martin cruised without getting much information about what was passing at Brest. He heard that some Martinique ships had got into Nantes, and he captured five large San Domingo and Martinique ships, the care of which was a source of some embarrassment to him. He was loth to reduce his squadron to provide an escort to carry them back into harbour, and his solution was to take as many men out of the prizes as possible—88 altogether—and put them on board the 'Princess Louisa'; which ship was to be in charge of the five captured vessels. If the enemy's fleet should be met the prizes were to be dropped, and the 'Princess Louisa' to make all sail to join the flag; if she should become separated from the squadron she was to carry the prizes to Plymouth with all despatch and rejoin the flag at the rendezvous without a moment's loss of time. Luckily it was not necessary to carry this arrangement out for long. A strong south-wester sprang up in which it would be impossible for the enemy to leave Brest, and Martin took immediate advantage of it to detach the 'Princess Louisa' with the prizes back to Plymouth.

On the afternoon of the 28th March a snow under French colours was captured. She proved to be the 'Ann' of Bristol which had been taken by a French squadron a few days earlier while on her way to the

<sup>1</sup> 'Captain,' 70; 'Monmouth,' 70; 'Princess Louisa,' 60, from Plymouth; and 'Lenox,' 70; 'Hampton Court,' 70; 'Edinburgh,' 70 and 'Prince Frederick,' 70, from Portsmouth.

Mediterranean with stores for the British fleet. From the British crew Martin learned that this squadron consisted of six sail<sup>1</sup>, was under the command of M. des Herbiers de l'Etanduère, and was accompanied by storeships and transports. Private letters gave information as to their destination. "We are going," wrote one correspondent to his mother, "to Le Cap, but I beg you to say nothing about it as it is to be kept secret." The futile person of whom Bacon speaks who makes it his glory to tell is common to all ages and nations.

Martin at once called a council of his captains. The 'Ann' had last seen the French in lat. 46° standing to the W.S.W. From her log it was calculated that they would now be about 70 leagues ahead, and as they were encumbered with storeships and with two heavy laden slow sailing British prizes, there was a fair possibility that they might be overhauled. Every stitch of canvas that would stand was therefore set at once, and the squadron pressed to the W.S.W., spreading in a line abreast at one mile intervals, in pursuit. The 'Ann' was despatched to England with the news.

For four days the chase was continued until, late on the afternoon of April 2nd, a Hamburg ship was met who reported that she had passed the French squadron that morning in lat. 41° 36' running to the southward with a fresh N.N.E. gale. Again Martin called his captains on board to consider the situation in the light of this news. It was calculated that the enemy were now nearly 240 miles ahead and that the immediate probability of overhauling them, since they would have picked up the northerly breeze, was remote. The squadron was already 750 miles from Plymouth, and Brest, the port which it was its principal duty to observe, would be open. In view of these circumstances it was agreed that the chase must be abandoned and the observation of Brest resumed. De l'Etanduère thus got clear away and Martin worked back to his station off Ushant.

The destination of the French, as exposed in the private letter, was "le Cap." There were two places so spoken of in those days—Cape François and Cape Breton—and to which the letter referred seems to have been uncertain. In his journal Martin said that the enemy were bound to the former; but in his letter to the Admiralty, sent by the 'Ann,' he said they were bound to Cape Breton. The Admiralty, who received the letter on April 3rd, accepted Cape Breton, and not without good reason, for the expedition from Boston would by now be on its way thither, and it was very probable that France would take steps to secure the key of her position in Canada. An order was therefore at once despatched to Warren in North America to look out

<sup>1</sup> There were two ships of 66, two of 56, one of 50 and one of 30 guns.

well and to act with all his strength if the squadron should arrive in his waters. As it turned out, it was not Cape Breton but Cape François to which de l'Etanduère was going, and there he eventually arrived in safety.

After his short but exhilarating chase Martin returned to his station to the S.W. of Ushant which he reached on April 13th, and there continued cruising. He was joined by two more English<sup>1</sup> and four Dutch ships which gave him a respectable, though not an exceptionally strong squadron.

Within a few days Martin began to get news of the French at Brest and Rochefort. Eight of the line and four large frigates were said to be in the former port, ready for the sea, to be joined later by twelve more from Rochefort which were as yet unready for want of men. "Upon this information," he wrote<sup>2</sup>, "I determined to keep nearer upon the French coast to be more in the way of intercepting them or gaining further information." This he did, but the further information he gained served only to confuse. Four ships, and not twelve, were now reported to be at Rochefort; the ships at Brest were not ready to sail; a fleet of 40 merchant ships had recently sailed from St Martin's; no ships had sailed from St Martin's. All that appeared to be fairly clear was that there were about eight large ships still at Brest and a number between four and twelve at Rochefort. Brest was a more certain danger point than Rochefort, so the best thing Martin could do was to keep close to that port as long as he could remain out. He clung therefore to the neighbourhood of Ushant until May 7th, when, having been over six weeks at sea, his ships foul, light, and short of beer and water, and his ships' companies falling sick, he bore away for Plymouth where he anchored on the 12th of May. Although he had not met the enemy his cruise had produced a salutary effect. The news of the capture of the five West India ships had quickly reached all the ports on the west coast of France, where the report that a British squadron twelve strong was cruising in the Bay held up all sailings until it was too late for the trade to make its departure in time to reach the West Indies before the hurricane season.

Directly Martin anchored, another squadron under Captain Griffin consisting of three ships<sup>3</sup> was ordered out to take his place in the Soundings, and keep an eye upon Brest to give warning in case the squadron there should be intended to be employed against the kingdom.

<sup>1</sup> 'Princess Louisa' and 'Defiance.' The former returning after she had seen the prizes into safety.

<sup>2</sup> Journal of Admiral Martin.

<sup>3</sup> 'Captain,' 'Monmouth' and 'Princess Louisa.' Instructions of May 15th, 1745.

## Disposition of Ships in Home Waters, May 1745.

## Convoys and Cruisers.

'Blandford'	24	}	Off Lisbon.
'Alderney'	24		
'Ferret'	sloop	}	Off Oporto.
'Greyhound'	24		
'Eltham'	44	}	Convoy to New England.
'Ludlow Castle'	44		
		}	Under Captain Hamilton, cruising off Cape Clear.
'Augusta'	60		
'Falkland'	50		
'Saphire'	44		
'Terror'	sloop	}	To call once every 3 weeks at Kinsale for orders.
		}	Enforcing embargo at Kinsale and Cork.
'Mary,' galley	44	}	Bristol Channel.
'Port Mahon'	24		
		}	Convoy trade from Bristol to Plymouth.
'Mortar'	sloop	}	Bristol Channel.
'Pearl'	44		
		}	Convoy Plymouth to Downs.
'Bridgewater'	24	}	Convoy 10 ships Penzance to Nore.
'Serpent'	sloop	}	Convoy a ship with anchors Torbay to Plymouth.
'Vulture'	"	}	Convoy Southampton to Channel Islands.
'Lizard'	"		
'Hawk'	"	}	Convoy Rye to Exmouth and back to Downs.
'Baltimore'	"	}	Cruising between Beachy and Dungeness.

## Convoys and Cruisers (continued).

'Granado'	sloop	}	Convoy to the Elbe.
'Newcastle'	50	}	Convoy some India ships into the Lea and then return Spithead.
'Fox'	20	}	At Leith to protect trade.
'Hazard'	sloop		
'Gibraltar'	20	}	Convoy Humber to Rotterdam.
'Shoreham'	24	}	Hull. Cruising for 2 privateers.
'Dover'	44	}	To seek for 3 privateers off Tyne-mouth and to northward.
'Jamaica'	sloop		
'Squirrel'	20	}	Convoy Yarmouth to Holland.
'Falcon'	sloop	}	Cruising at back of Yarmouth Sands, calling every 14 days for orders.
'Swift'	"	}	Protect trade at Lynn, Boston and neighbouring towns.
'Speedwell'	"		
'Tryal'	"	}	Protect Iceland fishery.
'York' armed ves.		}	Cruising between Milford and Plymouth.
'John & Ann'	"		
'St Quintin'	"	}	Humber.
'Baltimore'	"		
'Charles'	"	}	Bristol Channel.
'Happy Jennet'	"		
'James & Mary'	"	}	Tynemouth.
'Fly'	sloop		
		}	Leith.
		}	Mounts Bay.

Total 41 vessels, to which 7 would be added after conveying the King to Holland.

*To convey the King  
to Holland and then  
cruise in the Chan-  
nel.*

## Western Squadron.

'Edinburgh'	70	}	'Yarmouth'*	70
'Lenox'	70			70
'P. Frederick'	70	}	'Pembroke'*	60
'Hampton Court'	70			50
'Monmouth'	70	}	'Portland'	50
'Captain'	70			50
'P. Louisa'	60	}	'Gloucester'	44
'Defiance'	60			44
'Tavistock'	10.14	}	'Kinsale'	20
				20
		}	'Success'	24
				24
		}	'Sheerness'	sloop
				sloop
		}	'Wolf'	sloop
				sloop
		}	'Saltash'	sloop
				sloop

## At Home Ports.

'Royal Sovereign'	100	}	(Nore)
'Royal George'	90		
'Sandwich'	90	}	(Chatham)
'P. Royal'	90		
'St George'	90	}	(Spithead)
'Duke'	90		
'P. George'	90	}	(Downs)
'Shrewsbury'	80		
'Lion'	60	}	(Chatham)
'Hastings'	44	}	(Spithead)
		}	(fitting at Woolwich)

\* Temporarily detached from Western Squadron.



As to this Martin was in no uneasiness, since the French had twelve sail only, which gave them but a bare equality with the Anglo-Dutch western squadron; and, as he shrewdly observed "the French don't know but we may have more"—no unimportant consideration, yet one not infrequently overlooked.

By dint of comparing of a large number of reports information as to the position of the French gradually crystallised into there being twelve ships divided between Brest and Quiberon Bay and another three or four at Rochefort. Martin was accordingly directed on May 24th to get to sea again to watch Brest as soon as he could; but while he was completing the refit of his squadron, news reached the Admiralty that a rich merchant fleet was about to sail from the port of Rochelle for the westward. The series of alterations in his instructions which followed shews a certain lack of definition in the functions of the squadron. We have seen that the covering of the Louisbourg expedition was one of the most important duties to be performed. So far as was known the threat to this expedition lay in the ships at Brest, and these in consequence formed the squadron's first objective. The news of this Rochelle fleet changed the principal object of the western squadron from one of preventing the main French squadron from interfering with our oversea expedition—that is to say, a covering duty to ensure the security of the communications of the forces operating in America—to one of direct attack upon the enemy's trade; and this perforce left Brest open and uncovered the expedition.

Four days later (June 12th) a new advice from France stated that six of the ships at Brest were about to go to Cape Breton, and that two of them had put to sea and were cruising in the chops of the Channel. Martin's orders to go after the Rochelle trade were at once cancelled, and he was directed to wait at Plymouth until he should be joined by two more ships and the Virginia trade which he was to escort into the sea—a return to the mischievous system of direct trade protection which already had proved so unsatisfactory. Two days later—still before he had sailed, since the Virginia trade had not arrived—he was again ordered to get to sea at once, even with so few as three ships, as the Lisbon trade had just been reported to be on its way home, and danger was anticipated from the two French ships said to be cruising in the Channel's mouth. The administration were endeavouring to make Martin's small squadron perform the dual function of watching Brest for the main squadron of the enemy, in order to cover the kingdom, of attacking the enemy's trade which sailed from the more southern ports, and at the same time of protecting convoys coming from and proceeding abroad, from sporadic attack. It was wholly impossible that the western

squadron should perform all these functions unless it were greatly strengthened; and confusion followed when one claim or the other appeared to predominate. The squadron could have performed either one of the functions, if confined to that duty; but it could not perform both unless its strength should be greatly increased. By trying to do too many things it succeeded in none.

*State and Disposition of ships of the line, June 1745.*

ENGLISH.				FRENCH AND SPANISH.			
				<i>West Indies.</i>			
Leeward Islands	...	...	5	French at Martinique	...	6	
Jamaica	...	...	5	"    Hispaniola	...	6	
				Spanish at Havana	...	9	
			10			21	
				<i>Mediterranean.</i>			
Up the Straits	...	...	23	French at Villefranche	...	3	
Off Cadiz*	...	...	12	"    Toulon	...	3	
				Spanish at Carthage	...	17	
			35			23	

\* This was before the ships ordered home parted company.

				<i>At Home.</i>			
Squadron for Channel and Soundings	...	...	10	French in Quiberon Bay	...	8	
Six 3-decked ships in Port which may be got ready for sea in a little time	...	...	6	"    Brest	...	4	
Taken from the Soundings to go to West Indies	...	...	2	"    Rochefort	...	3	
				Spanish in their Biscay Ports	...	6	
				French sailed from Cadiz with not more than 3 months' provisions on board to escort some Spanish Register ships to Canaries: whither they are to return is uncertain, but they are said to be expected at Brest	...	12	
			18			33	
Grand total, 63				Grand total, 77			

There are 15 ships of the line (English) employed in North America, in the East Indies, coast of Africa, St Helena, and upon the coast of Ireland; but whether the enemy have any in those parts is unknown. These 15 with the above-mentioned 63 making 78 in all are the total number of his Majesty's ships of the line of battle that are either employed or in a condition to be employed, at sea, tho' there are six more at present in commission at home, but unfit for service, viz. two three-decked ships appropriated to receive and secure prest men and four ships just arrived from Jamaica with Sir Chaloner Ogle and under orders to be paid off<sup>1</sup>.

The Admiralty were fully aware of the need of greater strength in the western squadron; but to furnish it was far from easy, as the tabulated disposition shews. Demands for reinforcements were coming in

<sup>1</sup> S.P. Dom. Naval, 28.

from all quarters. Rowley with 23 sail of the line in the Mediterranean was endeavouring to watch Carthage, Villefranche and Toulon, between which 23 sail of the enemy were divided<sup>1</sup>. Twelve ships of his command had been detached to watch Cadiz for de Piosin, and Rowley was asking for ships to replace those which had come home, and for a squadron of another twelve to be sent off Finisterre and as far south as Lisbon in order to intercept de Piosin if he should endeavour to return to Ferrol or a French port instead of to Cadiz. Admiral Davers at Jamaica had represented how inferior he was, and how unable he had therefore been to execute any service against the enemy. The weakness in the Leeward Islands, where five British ships were opposed to six French, had rendered necessary the detachment of two more sail thither<sup>2</sup>; these were taken from the western squadron, and this withdrawal in turn had drawn a strong remonstrance from Martin that in consequence of the reduction of his force he would be unable to keep a sufficient number of ships continually at sea, with others in port cleaning so as to maintain a constant succession of clean ships. As the table shews, the problem before the Admiralty was, how, with 78 ships of the line and an uncertain Dutch contingent, effectively to control the sea-communications against 77 of the same class of ships of the enemy. Obviously nothing but the greatest economy of force could succeed, and this economy would be obtained not by scattering forces but by concentration in the covering area. To the Ministry, to whom these requests from the Mediterranean and West Indies had been made, the Admiralty replied that they could not venture any further to reduce the force at home, which even with the Dutch was but just sufficient to counterbalance the strength which the enemies had in their western ports; and if Piosin should come to Brest, superiority in the Channel would vanish, whereas if he returned to the Mediterranean the British would still be strong enough to deal with the combined enemy squadrons. The West Indies, it was true, were in imminent danger, but it was also impossible to send a proper reinforcement thither. Not only therefore did they recommend no increase in Rowley's squadron, but that it should be reduced by sending home the eight worst conditioned ships to strengthen the force of the Channel; and they urged that the States-General should be pressed to maintain their auxiliary squadron in a proper condition of victuals and stores. England was certainly fortunate at this time in the absence of unity of effort and command on the part of her enemies!

<sup>1</sup> The Admiralty represented the whole situation, together with the table and note shewn on p. 155, on 4th June, 1745. *Memorials and Reports*, 1745.

<sup>2</sup> 'Lenox' and 'Pembroke.'

Martin, who received the orders to get to sea to protect the Lisbon convoy on June 16th, sailed next morning with his squadron. The delay in his sailing from the succession of alterations in his orders proved most unfortunate. During his absence from his cruising ground a French squadron of five sail, under the command of de Conflans with his flag on board the 'Northumberland,' sailed with a rich fleet for Martinique, and was sighted steering W. by N. by some British privateers on the 19th June<sup>1</sup>. Martin fell in with the privateers on June 24th and at once endeavoured to get to the southward against foul winds, but he was too far astern and saw nothing of the French; and while he was beating against the south-wester, another squadron of seven ships of war<sup>2</sup> under Macnémara sailed from Brest on the 1st of July with a second convoy, bound to the West Indies.

The sailing of Macnémara's squadron came to Martin's knowledge on July 19th. On that day he fell in with the 'Old Noll,' privateer, whose master gave the Admiral the information of having met the seven ships on the 12th and of having learned from a petty officer on board a prize he had picked out from the convoy that Macnémara was bound to Cape Breton—an incorrect statement, for he was going to San Domingo. The enemy had too long a start for Martin to be able to overhaul them and he therefore had to content himself with sending off a schooner to England with the news<sup>3</sup>. Thus by trying to stop two squadrons Martin intercepted neither. The blame is not his, for his instructions directed him to pay attention both to Brest and Rochefort. Neither was given preference over the other, and he had not force enough to watch both ports, or even to maintain a constant watch on one of them; and the intelligence at this disposal was too imperfect to enable him to say at any moment which was the more proper port to which to devote his attention. It is the duty of an Administration clearly to formulate its strategy, to decide what is the primary object towards which the main effort is to be directed. When the end is brought clearly into view the means of achieving it are more easily distinguished. The temptation of trying to be strong everywhere, and simultaneously to conduct two or more separate operations will be overcome, and concentration of effort upon the principal object, that sole guide to decisive success, will result.

<sup>1</sup> His position was given as lat. 45° N., long. 14° W.

<sup>2</sup> 'Mars,' 'St Michel,' 'Rénommée,' 'Parfaite,' 'Galatée,' 'Argonaute,' 'Étourneau.'

<sup>3</sup> Shortly after parting company the schooner was pursued by a French 20-gun ship—the 'Panther.' The schooner hastened back for protection, and the chase being observed, the 'Monmouth' was detached to turn the tables. The 'Panther,' trusting to her speed, continued her chase too long, and the 'Monmouth,' after a night's pursuit, ran her down and took her.



On the same day that Martin met the 'Old Noll,' a cutter which he had detached some days earlier to get information on the French coast rejoined him to report that she had been into Basque Roads on July 14th and had there seen five sail of men-of-war and a great fleet of merchant ships, which was joined by another 30 from Nantes next day. On this Martin held a council of war, of his senior captains, at which a Dutch Admiral, nine English and three Dutch captains were present, and he put the question to them as to whether it would be feasible to attack and destroy the fleet in Basque Roads. The council unanimously decided that it was not advisable, considering the force at Martin's disposal, the nature of the Roads, the fortifications and the lack of pilots. The further question was then put as to whether it would be well to divide the squadron in order to enable a force to watch Rochefort as well as Brest; but the council voted against this proposition, expressing their opinion that it would merely make each part too weak to do effectual service, whereas if all the fleet kept together it would furnish the best hopes of capturing all the men-of-war and most of the merchant vessels<sup>1</sup>. On this decision being arrived at Martin kept the squadron cruising to the S.W. of Ushant until his water ran short. He then put back into Plymouth where he anchored on the 12th August, having left a squadron of four ships<sup>2</sup> under Griffin to cruise 20 leagues S.W. of the Scillies for the protection of trade.

The justice of the council of war's decision not to do the tempting thing and divide the squadron was illustrated by the intelligence which was received on return to harbour that the French had now eleven sail of the line ready at Brest. When these are considered together with those known to be at Rochefort it would clearly have been impossible to make up two squadrons which should each be capable of dealing decisively with either of the divisions of the enemy.

Thus Martin's second cruise was distinctly disappointing. No less than three large convoys had sailed in safety under de l'Etanduère, Conflans and Macnémara. In the south, Caylus had got away untouched from Cadiz with yet another. The reason is connected not only with the inadequacy of the squadron for watching two widely separated places, but also the lack of small cruisers with which to watch the ports themselves. Martin's representations of the subject of cruisers were numerous. He asked repeatedly for an addition of these essential vessels to his squadron, but they were not given him. A close inshore watch with his ships of force was difficult if not impossible to maintain, and the number of great ships under his command was insufficient to keep an adequate

<sup>1</sup> In letters. Martin to Admiralty, August 3rd, 1745.

<sup>2</sup> 'Captain,' 'Princess Louisa,' 'Monmouth,' 'Portland.'

squadron opposite each of the great western ports of France. His compromise was to keep his squadron cruising in the greatest strength he could on what he considered to be the most probable line of sailing of the enemy's ships, but it is not difficult to see what chances must in such circumstances be left to an enemy to evade the watching squadrons. Again, when water failed or men fell sick it was necessary to bring in all the squadron except a small detachment which fell back to the Soundings: that is to say the blockade was raised for the time, for the function of the squadron that remained cruising was no longer the same as that of the main body. It degenerated from a squadron cruising to deal with the enemy's squadrons issuing from the western ports into a small force withdrawn into the Soundings for the protection of trade. Nor was it only the trade that became exposed, for during the absence of the main body the overseas operations in North America were no longer covered, nor was there any force ready to prevent the enemy from sending an expedition to assist the beleaguered garrison in Cape Breton.

For the present however the defence of Louisbourg was not occupying the French Ministry, whose whole attention was turned towards the military campaign on the continent. This, so far as France was concerned, had altered its character considerably. With the death of the Emperor Charles VII on Jan.  $\frac{9}{20}$ , 1745, the Franco-Bavarian alliance, already weak, became weaker. As we have already seen the interest of France in the Bavarian claim to the Imperial Crown lay in the effect its establishment would have in weakening the power of Austria. She now decided to abandon the Bavarian cause and make war upon her own account in prosecution of her old ambitions in the Low Countries, which would only be hindered by dispersing her strength in other enterprises. Great as the military strength of France then was, it was, as de Noailles had foreseen, not sufficient to support at the same time campaigns on the Danube, in the Netherlands and in Italy. The final blow to the Franco-Bavarian alliance had been dealt in March of this year when an Austrian army under Batthiani surprised the allied Bourbon forces and swept them before it. The young Elector Maximilian Joseph fled to Augsburg, and his ministers were glad to patch up a peace<sup>1</sup> by which he recovered his own Bavarian dominions, renounced his Imperial pretensions, and engaged to remain neutral.

The retirement of Bavaria from the war gave France and Austria an opportunity to reconsider their positions. Maria Theresa saw the possibility of the attainment of one part of her desires—the election of her husband as Emperor; but her dominions in Italy and the Nether-

<sup>1</sup> Treaty of Füssen. April 22nd, 1745 (N.S.).

lands were still in danger, and Prussia still retained a firm hold on Silesia. France on the other hand, relieved from the incubus of supporting the Bavarian claim, was now free to devote her energies to the conquest of the Netherlands. The policy of England was directed towards ensuring that the seat of the Empire remained in the house of Austria, and in preventing French conquests in the Low Countries and Spanish conquests in Italy. Silesia was, to this kingdom, of lesser interest; and George II exerted himself to persuade the Queen of Hungary to abandon her ideas at reconquest and centre her energies on the preservation of Flanders. When therefore the campaign of 1745 opened, Great Britain supplied her full contingent of men for the defence of the territory which she felt she could not afford to see pass into the hands of a maritime power.

The Queen however would not relinquish her cherished wish to recover Silesia, and renewed her attack upon the Prussians under Frederick. A disastrous defeat of the Austrian forces at Hohenfriedberg resulted, with a subsequent stalemate in that theatre. But in the other theatre of the Low Countries neither Austria nor Holland provided the numbers of troops agreed upon, and when the army of the Alliance assembled it amounted to no more than 53,000 English, Dutch and Austrians to oppose a host of at least 80,000 French troops under the admirable leadership of Marshal Saxe.

Leaving its headquarters, which extended from Landrecies to Dunkirk, the main French army<sup>1</sup> marched on Tournai, a strongly defended city held by a garrison of Dutch troops. The allies under the Duke of Cumberland moved against Saxe, but sustained a severe defeat at Fontenoy on 30 April/11 May. Tournai fell eleven days later, and a series of rapid French successes followed. Ghent, Bruges and Oudenarde surrendered, Ostend was invested, and all that the Allies could do was to fall back and endeavour to cover Antwerp. This overwhelming advance caused consternation in England. The Duke of Newcastle fell into the deepest despair. Writing to Lord Hardwicke at this time he said that all was now lost and nothing remained but to sign a peace with Prussia, and to tell Maria Theresa that unless she would send her army now in Bohemia to the Rhine and Flanders we must leave her to make the best terms she could; "otherwise," he said, "as we have now lost Flanders we may soon lose England and Holland too, for I don't know what can stop that victorious army. I am sure our's in Flanders cannot." At a council meeting held on the 6th May, when the fall of Tournai was anticipated, it was agreed to press the Austrians to reduce their army under Batthiani to reinforce the Allies in the Low Countries;

<sup>1</sup> 119 battalions and 136 squadrons of cavalry

"though that may hinder the Queen of Hungary from sending troops to Italy: but Flanders is of more immediate consequence than Italy<sup>1</sup>."

The news of the fall of Ghent was received on the 4th July. A meeting was held at once at the Duke of Newcastle's house, at which Lord Sandwich, Lord Vere Beauclerk and Anson—three of the Lords of the Admiralty—were present. What was anticipated and feared was that the successes in Flanders would be followed up by an attempt at invasion of the British islands. It was in consequence decided to get a fleet together into the Downs immediately, to man all the three-decked ships, and get as many frigates and sloops as possible into the eastern end of the Channel with the least delay. "We are generally of opinion," Lord Sandwich wrote to the Duke of Bedford, "that great ships as a bulwark and ships under 50 guns will be the most likely to prevent an invasion or project of that nature, as the large ships will overawe any fleet they are likely to be able to send out, and the smaller ships be able to destroy any embarkation they may think of making in boats and small craft, and prevent their taking any great advantage from their new acquisition<sup>2</sup> by rendering it useless to them, by having a fleet of cruisers ready to intercept them in the narrow part of the Channel<sup>3</sup>." At the same time the necessity for appointing a Commander-in-Chief for the whole of the Channel was considered, the command previously held by Norris. Vernon's name was suggested, and he was accepted as the most suitable person. It is indicative of how well informed the French were as to all that passed, that at the end of June M. d'Aulnay wrote to d'Argenson and informed him that it was intended to appoint Vernon to the command of a fleet of 20 ships for home service<sup>4</sup>.

The apprehensions that an invasion would be attempted were not without foundation. The fears produced in England by the battle of Fontenoy had not passed unnoticed in France. On May  $\frac{1}{2}$  M. d'Aulnay wrote to d'Argenson saying "Never has the opportunity been fairer for a general rising, for there are not more than 13,000 men in the three kingdoms supposing all the corps to be complete, and if they are going to send the six battalions as it is said they are, as well as fifteen and ten men per company of infantry and cavalry, the whole of the three kingdoms will find themselves protected by five thousand men at the most and no ships, all their fleet being at sea<sup>5</sup>."

<sup>1</sup> *S.P. Dom. Various V.*

<sup>2</sup> I.e. the territory of Flanders.

<sup>3</sup> Lord Sandwich to the Duke of Bedford, July 4th, 1745. Bedford Papers.

<sup>4</sup> d'Aulnay to d'Argenson, June 29th. *Les Campagnes du Maréchal Saxe*, J. Colin.

<sup>5</sup> *Campagnes du Maréchal Saxe*, J. Colin.



The idea, indeed, of invasion had been kept in view ever since the previous abortive attempt of February 1744. In January 1745 an anonymous author had submitted a scheme to the Ministry, which consisted in arming a large number of medium sized vessels, ostensibly for the purpose of attacking trade, and assembling them at Brest whither some 5000 troops were quietly to be withdrawn from Flanders. The expedition was to sail unobserved and land in the Bristol Channel. The plan was rejected, and properly so; but it is worth observing that Vernon thought it possible that the enemy might make a feint from Flanders and make their real attempt from a western port if they succeeded by their feint in drawing our forces up Channel to the Downs, as they had been drawn in the earlier attempt. The French King however was disinclined to make any new venture at this moment. The earlier expedition had been a bitter disappointment, and unless the prospects of success were very great it was undesirable to withdraw troops from the Flanders campaign. But the British Administration were very right in anticipating that a favourable opportunity was all that was required for a revival of the attempt, and in reading in the French successes of July the first elements of that opportunity.

Much depended on the fate of Ostend. It was now fully invested, but there was hope it might hold out. Preparations both to reinforce the garrison and to withdraw the British and Dutch troops in case of failure were made. Captain Thomas Smith went across in the 'Pearl' to confer with Count Chandos, the fortress Commander, as to what naval help might be effective, but he quickly saw that this could not be of any real assistance as the enemy's batteries were beyond the range of the naval guns. He landed some quarter gunners, but beyond that he could do nothing. The town capitulated in the second week in August.

As the fall of Ostend had grown more imminent, the alarms of the British Ministry had increased. On July 23rd the Admiralty were ordered to get all ships, great and small, together in the Downs or at Spithead. Martin was at once to be informed of the expected French intention to invade, and Vernon was to assume the principal command that had been agreed upon on the 7th July<sup>1</sup>. On July 27th orders were sent to Rowley to bring home at once all the clean ships that could be spared from the Mediterranean in order to reinforce the fleet in home waters, and Medley was to remain in command with such ships as would serve for the campaign in Italy. A comment made by Hardwicke upon this order is not without interest. "May it not be possible," he wrote to the Duke of Newcastle, "that upon Rowley's coming out of the Medi-

<sup>1</sup> Minutes of meetings of Committee of Council. *S.P. Dom. Various V.*

terranean with any considerable number of ships and leaving there a bare superiority over that force which France and Spain have at present in those seas, that the Brest squadron may be ordered into the Mediterranean and there form such a strength as may be able to destroy the squadron that will be left there? I don't know whether there's anything in this suggestion, but the Lords of the Admiralty might consider it...If I remember right the orders to Martin to follow them are only *in case they come this way*. There were some who upon the occasion of the last intended invasion thought it fortunate the Brest squadron did not take that course<sup>1</sup>." The comment is an eminently just one and affords one of the many testimonies of the great Lord Chancellor's appreciation of the principles of naval warfare. The orders to Martin were however sent in their original form, but it is observable that in the instructions sent about ten days later, dated August 7th, both to Vernon<sup>2</sup> and to Martin, these commanders are ordered definitely to block up Brest and prevent any designs the enemy might have at sea. Couched in such a form the Admiral would have considered himself entitled, if he got certain intelligence—that elusive commodity—that the enemy had sailed for the Mediterranean, to follow them and bring them to action as the only method of preventing their designs, be they what they might.

Such was the anxious situation abroad, while at home Jacobite unrest was ominously smouldering. Hitherto, for lack of a leader to manage their jealousies and misgivings, there had been no overt act to bring the difficulties of the Government to a crisis. But now the last touch was to be given to their perplexities. Secretly Prince Charles Edward had decided to stake the Stuart cause on one bold throw, and early in August, accompanied by a mere handful of followers, he landed in Scotland.

The Prince did not make his sea passage without interference. Embarking at Nantes on board a small vessel, the 'Doutelle,' on July 7th, he sailed to the northward and was met off Belleisle by the 'Elizabeth,' 64, a French man-of-war. The two vessels then sailed on in company making for the west coast of Scotland. A N.N.W. wind obliged them to stand to the westward, and on the 9th July, being then about 120 miles to the westward of the Lizard in latitude 47° 57', they were sighted by the 'Lion,' 58, commanded by Captain Piercy Brett, the officer who had been Anson's captain in the 'Centurion.' Brett crowded on sail and by three in the afternoon was able to make the ships out to be

<sup>1</sup> Newcastle Papers. B.M. Add. MS. 33004.

<sup>2</sup> When Vernon was appointed to the chief command in home waters. See *infra*, p. 165.

enemies. At four they hoisted French colours; at five he ran alongside the 'Elizabeth' and engaged her yard arm to yard arm. One of the severest single ship actions in naval annals followed. "By 6 my mizen topmast was shot away," wrote Brett in his letter, "and soon after that my mizen mast and mizen yard came down upon deck. By 8 o'clock the quarter of my main yard and foretopsail yard arm were shot away, and main topsail yard in the slings. By 9 all my lower masts and topmasts were shot through in many places...The enemy did not receive much damage in his masts and yards but his hull must have suffered greatly. At 10 o'clock he sheered off...The small ship in the beginning made two attempts to rake me but I soon beat him off with my stern chase<sup>1</sup>." Although the enemy fired mostly at the 'Lion's' spars the British ship's losses were heavy; 45 men were killed and 107 wounded of whom seven died. But Brett's fire at the French ship's hull was the more effective; the 'Elizabeth' lost 64 killed and 140 wounded. The determination with which this five hours' duel was fought does honour to both ships. Although the 'Elizabeth' was superior to the 'Lion' both in number and weight of guns, the heavy losses she sustained are a tribute to the conduct of her crew, as they are also to the judgment of the English seamen in concentrating their fire on the hull rather than at both the spars and hull of their enemy. The result of the action was that the British ship was crippled, the 'Elizabeth' was able to crawl back to her port; but Prince Charles in the 'Doutelle' completed his voyage to Scotland in safety.

On the 25th of July he landed at Moidart and on August 12th raised his standard at Glenfinnan. The news of his having left France did not reach the Lords Justices until the 31st of July. A proclamation for his arrest was at once promulgated. As in 1744, the connexion between his departure and the preparations then reported to be making in the ports of France was too probable to pass unobserved and the Admiralty were on that day informed that the Government had received "undoubted intelligence that the resolution is actually formed at the Court of France to make an invasion immediately upon His Majesty's Dominions, and it appears by several advices relating to the preparations making in the ports and upon the coast of France that steps are already making towards the execution of that design; we send you herewith copies of the said advices and do enjoin you in the strongest manner to observe the strictest secrecy with relation to this important intelligence."

The advices contained the news that the Pretender's son had embarked at Nantes and was believed to have landed in Scotland, and

<sup>1</sup> Captains' Letters. Brett to Admiralty, July 19th, 1745.

Martin was told that "the preventing any attempt being made on any part of His Majesty's dominions by any of the French ships that may be in the western ports of France and the intercepting of the trade to the West Indies coming from those ports are the services to which you are to attend: you are to make such disposition of your squadron as if possible to answer both these ends: but in all events you are to give your principal attention to the preventing any attempt being made upon any part of His Majesty's Dominions." He was directed to employ small ships to get intelligence, and was told that the latest news was to the effect that on the 8th July there were no ships in Brest Road, and four only in the harbour; that on the 4th of the same month there were eleven at Rochefort and 200 sail of merchant shipping with American ladings on board, supposed to be intended to be convoyed by all the men-of-war into the open water, when five would return to Rochefort and the remaining six carry the trade to the West Indies; he was instructed to corroborate this information by sending a small ship to Brest, and dispose his squadron to destroy the Rochefort ships if they came to sea: but if it should turn out that a considerable number of ships were at Brest he was to devote his attention to them<sup>1</sup>.

A week later the news that an invasion was intended became more definite. Martin was then directed to fall back with all his force to the Lizard, and Vernon, who had still received no instructions in spite of the decision on July 23rd, was at last ordered to hoist his flag at Portsmouth. His instructions, dated August 7th, after informing him that Martin had been ordered off the Lizard to meet him, continued "We send you herewith the several intelligences that have been transmitted hither of the preparations of the enemy at Brest and in the other ports of West France and of the several designs their ships are fitting out for, particularly that there is a scheme on foot for invading his Majesty's dominions, and do direct you, so soon as you have joined Admiral Martin, to proceed to sea and endeavour to learn what is doing at Brest, and so to dispose of the ships under your command as according to the advices you may get shall prevent the enemy from putting out from the ports of Brest or West France, and defeat any designs they may have at sea."

"And whereas this is the season for our foreign trade, as well as that of the enemy, from India, America and other parts to be on their way home, you are either to station the whole or part of your squadron so as to endeavour to protect and defend the trade of his Majesty's subjects and to intercept that of the enemy: and in order to enable you to do the same we shall send out to you from time to time some more

<sup>1</sup> Out letters, July 31st, 1745.



ships, as well of the line of battle as frigates, as fast as they can be got ready."

He was told also what was known of Martin's squadron up to the 19th July, and of the movements which had been ordered<sup>1</sup> to strengthen him; and that all the other Dutch ships available, under Admiral t'Hooft, were ordered to join him with all possible haste<sup>2</sup>.

Vernon's instructions were cancelled before he could even begin to put them into operation. The rumour that an invasion was to be made from the Flemish and French Channel ports became supported by such strong evidence that Vernon was ordered to proceed to the Downs instead of to the westward and take all the ships there under his orders<sup>3</sup>.

Martin was not recalled, but was left to perform the duties of the western squadron, the principal of which was the observation of and obtaining intelligence from Brest. Anxious about invasion as the Government shewed itself to be, the need for protection of trade was not lost sight of and this duty still formed a great part of the responsibilities of Martin's command; a large proportion of the orders sent to him during the next two months related to commerce defence, and in particular to ensuring the safety of a homeward bound East India fleet. His cruising ground alternated between a close station off Brest and one to the westward of the Scillies, and in these neighbourhoods he remained, his squadron reinforced by some of the large three-deckers from the Downs, until the end of November, when the bulk of his ships were ordered to their home ports to refit for the winter, a squadron of five ships under a senior captain being kept cruising in the Soundings for the defence of trade. The danger from Brest was by then considered to have evaporated, since the state of the ships there was such that no serious apprehensions were felt as to what they could do. The real danger now lay to the eastward, and the interests of the last months of 1745 are centred there.

							Ships	Frigates and Sloops
1 With Martin on	July 19th	{	'Edinburgh,' 70; 'Hampton Court,' 70; 'Yarmouth,' 64; 'P. Frederick,' 70 ... ..	4	-			
Sailed to join him:								
Sailed Plymouth June	(they joined him on July 20th)	{	'Captain,' 70; 'Monmouth,' 70; 'P. Louisa,' 60 ... ..	3	-			
Sailed St Malo July	20th (joined on 29th)	{	'Gloucester,' 50; 'Portland,' 50; 'Edam,' 54; 'Tavistock,' 10.14...	3	1			
Sailed Plymouth July	6th	{	'Assendelft,' 54 ... ..	1	-			
" Spithead July	2nd	{	'Dordrecht,' 54; 'Brederode,' 54 ...	2	-			
" Downs July	24th	{	'Baltimore,' 14.14; 'Hinchinbrook,' 10.14 ... ..	-	2			
" Downs August	3rd	{	'Milford,' 44 ... ..	-	1			
			Total available	13	4			

<sup>2</sup> One only—the 'Tholen'—was ready.

<sup>3</sup> Out letters, August 15th, 1745.

*The Disposition of the Naval Forces in Home Waters.*

August 28, 1745.

<i>Squadron under Admiral Martin.</i>			<i>Squadron ordered to be under Admiral Vernon.</i>		
'Yarmouth'	70	} Now at Plymouth; under orders to sail with Martin.	'Royal George'	90	} Convoy to the King, then to join Vernon in the Downs.
'Edinburgh'	70		'Prince George'	90	
'Hampton Court'	70		'St George'	90	
'Prince Frederick'	70		'Sandwich'	90	
'Lion'	58		'Duke'	90	
'Captain'	70	} Cruising 20 leagues S.W. from Scilly.	'Nottingham'	60	
'Monmouth'	70		'Tilbury'	60	
'Princess Louisa'	60		'Gloucester'	50	
'Portland'	50		'Success'	24	
'Augusta'	60	} In Irish Channel.	'Norwich'	50	
'Falkland'	50		'Kinsale'	40	
'Saphire'	40		'Ludlow Castle'	40	
'Baltimore' sloop			'Poole'	44	
'Port Mahon'	24	} Gone to Skye and Mull.	'Folkestone'	44	
'Serpent'			'Sheerness'	20	
'Terror'			'Bridgewater'	20	
'Furnace'			'Glasgow'	20	
			'Weazel'	10.16	
			'Wolf'	10.16	

Also 6 sail of Dutch ships ordered to join Vernon from Portsmouth.

## CHAPTER VIII

### OPERATIONS IN THE NARROW SEAS.

AUGUST 1745—FEBRUARY 1746

ADMIRAL VERNON, as we have seen, was appointed on August 7th to the command of the western squadron. He proceeded to Spithead and hoisted his flag on board the 'St George.' A week later he was ordered to take over the command in the Downs and he sailed thither with the 'St George,' 'Sandwich,' one Dutch ship<sup>1</sup> and a fireship. He anchored in the Downs on the 21st and found three 90-gun ships<sup>2</sup> riding there, besides some small craft, and in the course of the next few days was joined by five more ships<sup>3</sup>, so that a force of five ships of the line, six heavy frigates and four small vessels were assembled by the beginning of September in the Downs.

The rumours of invasion from Dunkirk or Flanders which had caused this assemblage of ships in the Downs were at this time looked upon by Vernon with some doubt. "I wish," he wrote, "this may not be a false alarm for drawing our great ships to the eastward at a time when they have their maritime force to the westward, and may design making their push that way." He also criticised severely the policy of employing the heavy ships to the eastward when they were, as we have seen, so greatly needed to the westward. "Our great ships ought to compose our Western Squadron," he wrote on the 17th August, two days after he had received his instructions to go to the Downs, "and the Eastern are to be composed of small ones that may pursue an enemy wherever they may take shelter." The great ships being leewardly, needed sea room to drive in and were unsuitable for these parts, besides being unnecessary to deal with the small craft of the enemy, which could moreover escape into the shoal harbours of the coast where the "long-legged" ships of force could not follow them. Vernon therefore proposed a change in the constitution of the squadrons, the five 90-gun ships to be sent to Martin, and seven 40-gun ships to be allocated to his own command instead. The Admiralty acceded to this in part and on 23rd August directed him to send two of the 90's to the westward; and five 40-gun ships, which the Board said were all that were available, were sent to him in the Downs. As three more Dutch ships under

<sup>1</sup> Probably the 'Tholen.'

<sup>2</sup> 'Prince George,' 'Duke,' 'Royal George,' 'Etna' fireship and two armed vessels.

<sup>3</sup> 'Dover,' 'Ludlow Castle,' 'Gloucester,' 'Mary' galley and a Dutch ship.

Admiral t'Hooft joined him on September 3rd he then had practically what he had asked for. But the three remaining 90's, which were unsuitable for the narrow sea, still remained with him. This division of force, keeping these heavy ships away from the principal cruising theatre to the westward, he criticised severely, and his comments upon Martin's instructions, a copy of which had been furnished to him, are not without interest. In these instructions, dated September 4th, Martin's cruising ground had been limited between the Lizard and the coast of France, with the evident intention of defending the Channel against the Brest squadron if that force should try to come up to Dunkirk as it had in the previous year. Vernon objected to this on the grounds that it left everything to the westward open to the French including the Bristol Channel. If the preparations for invasion from Dunkirk were a feint, the Brest squadron was free to go where it would—to the Mediterranean, to Ireland, to the West Indies, North America or the Bristol Channel. On the other hand "a western squadron, formed as strong as we can make it by the junction of these five great ships to those Admiral Martin has to the westward and what others can be spared and got speedily out into the Soundings, might face their united force<sup>1</sup>, cover both Great Britain and Ireland and be in condition to pursue them wherever they went, and be at hand to secure the safe return of our homeward bound trade from the East and West Indies: and the Dutch squadron<sup>2</sup> joined to such as we could make up to the eastward with those that are now cruising off Dunkirk, and others to be added to them, under the command of an Admiral, would in my apprehension be a squadron to keep them in awe at Dunkirk, and proper for pursuing them if they got out, and capable of destroying them whenever they come up with them." This is the first clear formulation in this war of the system which became established as the only sound one in the latter half of the century<sup>3</sup>. The idea of the formation of a strong western squadron by collecting together all the scattered units of ships of the line, has been attributed to Anson, and in his capacity as a member of the Board it was possibly he who caused it to be put into execution. But the proposal, as this letter among others shews, was put forward by Vernon at least a year earlier.

At the same time as Vernon was thus endeavouring to improve

<sup>1</sup> I.e. the force the French and Spaniards would have if, as they might, they effected a junction of the squadrons then at Brest, Rochefort and Ferrol.

<sup>2</sup> The Dutch ships were all lighter and more suitable for work in the narrow seas than for cruising to the westward. They were mostly ships of 54 guns and small draft.

<sup>3</sup> *Letters from an Honest Sailor*. Vernon to the Admiralty, September 7th, 1745.



the disposition of the squadrons information brought from Dunkirk by one of his cruisers shewed that ships were collecting there, and it was even said that some had already sailed thence carrying recruits to Scotland to stimulate the Jacobite cause. Vernon received his cruiser's report on September 7th, and sent it by express to the Admiralty. The intimate touch in which the King—who had just returned from Hanover—was kept as to the movements of the fleet, and the authority that he continued to exercise, are shewn in the following reply to Vernon written by Lord Vere Beauclerk<sup>1</sup>.

“Your letters by express arrived here this morning about 9 o'clock and as soon as it was possible Admiral Anson and myself waited upon his Majesty with them; who upon reading them said he would have some ships detached after them when it should be certain they were gone for Scotland, but added, that the great object still was to watch the coast from Ostend down to Dunkirk and Calais....We are apt to think there has been no embarkation as yet from any of the enemy's ports, for we imagine they would have joined this strength to the other two ships<sup>2</sup>, so we beg you would enquire as particularly as 'tis possible into that intelligence which said there were 30 sail of ships and vessels in Dunkirk, for this last account of their being but eight agrees exactly with what we had, before that I just mentioned of thirty. Upon the whole as we have no secretary or clerks in town, nor nobody but Mr Anson and myself, it is impossible to send you regular orders, but we do desire you would detach Rear-Admiral Byng with such ships as you think proper over to the coast of France and Flanders, with discretionary orders to proceed to Scotland or wherever he may have certain intelligence of an embarkation of troops being gone to, and 'til we can supply you with more we think you may avail yourself of the 'Kinsale' and 'Dover' while the wind is westerly, taking care not to send them far off. I hope the 'Gloucester' is with you by this time, and that you will have the 'Tilbury' tomorrow. Mr Byng will of course let us know if he determines upon going to Scotland, and by all ways send what intelligence he can of the enemy's motions and designs.”

The importance of preventing the insurgent army from receiving help from France was accentuated by Prince Charles's rapid successes. Capturing Dundee and Perth, the Highland army marched southward without difficulty, for the military establishment in Scotland was weak, scattered, untrained and unreliable. Sir John Cope, who had left Edinburgh so early as August 19th, with a small force of 1500

<sup>1</sup> Secret Instructions, September 8th, 1745. Out letters, 1331.

<sup>2</sup>I.e. two French vessels of 36 and 30 guns which had just been engaged by the 'Mary' galley, Captain Swanton.

men in the hopes of preventing an extension of the rising by a display of force, and of obtaining volunteers, had been unable to do either. The southward march of the Prince brought the two armies within reach of each other, but Cope, recognising the advantages of the enemy, avoided an ambush at Corryarrack and hastened to extract his force from a dangerous situation by marching for Inverness and calling for transports to carry him south. Shipping was sent to Aberdeen and there he embarked his army; and while Prince Charles, now wholly unopposed, pushed for Edinburgh by land, Cope moved his army by sea. On the 16th September, a panic at Coltbrigg opened the way to the Scottish capital; on the 17th the Prince entered the city. On the same days Cope was landing his men at Dunbar, and reinforced with infantry and guns was beginning to march eastward<sup>1</sup>.

While Byng was ordered to investigate and follow up the report from Dunkirk, a small squadron consisting of the 'Fox,' 'Glasgow' and some small craft, together with some Dutch ships, was sent to cruise off Leith and the coast adjacent in order to intercept any reinforcements that might have got away from France, and also with the object of attacking the rebels' communications—mostly carried out in small sloops and boats—across those firths into which the King's ships and sloops could pass. This squadron came a little later under the command of Byng, and it is worthy of remark that the instructions to the commanders of this patrol flotilla directed them "to act according to such instructions as you shall receive from his Majesty's generals in those parts." Byng's instructions directed him "to keep a constant correspondence with Marshal Wade and the generals in Scotland," and it is clear that direct orders were subsequently sent both by the Duke of Cumberland and the generals to Byng and the commanders of the ships. In February the Duke despatched the 'Hound' and 'Gloucester' to Aberdeen to intercept some vessels reported to have arrived there with arms, and sent orders to Byng to prevent the enemy from passing from Perth to Dundee. Similarly there are many instances of the captains receiving orders from Cope to send ships to carry out services<sup>2</sup>. This close cooperation between the flotilla and the army was maintained throughout the war. Captain Towry who relieved Commodore Smith on the northern station in January 1747 had a clause in his instructions to the same effect which ran: "You are to correspond with the Earl of Albemarle and the Commanders in chief of his Majesty's

<sup>1</sup> Fortescue, *History of the British Army*, vol. II. chap. 6.

<sup>2</sup> E.g. "This morning I received a letter from Sir John Cope from Berwick desiring I would immediately send one of his Majesty's ships under my command to him. I have accordingly despatched Lt Belither...." Capt. E. Beaver to Admiralty Secretary. October 6th, 1745. Captains' Letters.

land forces in North Britain, and to employ the ships and vessels under your command, from time to time, on such services as shall be desired by his Lordship, for the good of his Majesty's service<sup>1</sup>."

While these measures were being taken on the Scottish coast Dutch troops were being brought over from Holland escorted by 40-gun ships, one between Helvoetsluys and the Swin, and another from the Swin to Leith. There was constant danger of privateers in the North Sea, for no watch on the ports of Dunkirk, Ostend, St Malo and La Hogue could be so close and continual as to ensure that no vessels should slip out.

In accordance with Lord Vere Beauclerk's letter, Vernon detached Byng on the 10th September with instructions to find out what force the enemy had, and whether any ships with troops had sailed to the northward. Byng, with his flag on board the 'Kinsale,' stood across to Nieuport with a squadron of three 50-gun ships, two of 40, a 20 and two sloops. From the information he obtained there it appeared to him certain that the report that a force of the enemy had escaped towards Scotland in the early days of September was correct. In accordance therefore with his discretionary orders he stood away for Scotland to endeavour to find them. He was ordered<sup>2</sup> not to go north of Edinburgh unless he should have certain news that the rebel army was to the northward of the city.

No move by sea of any importance was made during the remainder of the month of September. On shore, however, success was attending the Jacobite army. On Sept. 21st the British forces under Sir John Cope were destroyed at Prestonpans, and by the end of the month Prince Charles had Scotland at his feet. The force available to deal with this serious situation consisted on Sept. 24th of 29 battalions of foot, of which eight were Dutch, and 16 squadrons of horse and dragoons, a number considered insufficient. Orders were therefore sent to Flanders to hold six more battalions and nine squadrons in readiness to return to

<sup>1</sup> Instructions to Captain John Towry, Commander-in-Chief on the coast of Scotland, January 13th, 1747. Out letters. A similar view of cooperation between navy and army was held in 1798. The Duke of York at that time was furnished with a chart of the coast shewing the disposition of the ships, together with copies of the instructions which had been given to the Admirals and Captains. The instructions to Sir Richard Onslow, who commanded on the east coast in 1798, were on the same lines as those to Byng at the earlier date. "You are to keep a constant communication yourself," they ran, "and to direct the Captains under your command to communicate with the General officers commanding his Majesty's forces on that part of the coast where they may be stationed, to consult with them on all necessary occasions, and give the said officers every information which may enable them more effectually to forward the service on which they are employed, and at all times to cooperate with them in any measures which may prevent the success of an enemy attempting to land on the coast." Instructions to Sir R. Onslow, April 10, 1798. Secret Instructions, 353.

<sup>2</sup> P.R.O., Secret Instructions, September 15th, 1745.

England and the transports which had been employed in carrying troops from the Thames to Newcastle were diverted to Helvoetsluys to bring this contingent back<sup>1</sup>. Thus the rebellion was weakening our force in Flanders continually. But while the security of the sea route enabled us rapidly to transfer soldiers from the continent and back in safety, the French reinforcements which were hoped for by the rebels could proceed only in dribblets, and even the passage of these was insecure.

The decision to strengthen the home defence by the withdrawal of this last mentioned contingent was based not only on the situation in England but also on a report of great preparations at Ostend and Dunkirk for an invasion. Nor was this without sound foundation, for the French had at last decided to assist the Jacobites openly. Prince Charles, on the day he landed, had announced his initial success to Louis XV and had begged for his help and the King had ordered Maurepas to make arrangements for sending 6000 troops into either England or Scotland with the intention of making a diversion in favour of the Prince<sup>2</sup>.

The plan was again to be one of evasion. The troops were to be embarked at Ostend in thirty or forty large armed vessels which were to sail without convoy, trusting to evading the larger British ships and beating off the attacks of the smaller frigates and sloops which were watching the French and Flemish coasts. For the moment however nothing had been done, but after the news of Prestonpans arrived it was at once proposed to send 10,000 men to the mouth of the Thames much on the same lines as suggested in 1744. This plan was rejected on the advice of de Bussy, the late Ambassador in London, who represented that the number of ships and seamen always present in the Thames would make the landing impossible, and the troops which were kept in London would inevitably defeat the attempt. Instead, de Bussy suggested that the landing should be made in Bridlington Bay where the expeditionary corps would cut the communications of the British army in the north,—a false hope as these were principally by sea<sup>3</sup>.

Preparations were thereupon pressed forward at Dunkirk, and the Duc de Richelieu was appointed to command the expedition. It was these preparations which gave such uneasiness in England, and the

<sup>1</sup> The decision to withdraw them was made on October 2nd.

<sup>2</sup> On August 17. *Projets de descente en Angleterre*, P. Coquelle. *Revue d'Histoire diplomatique*, 1901, pp. 598-599.

<sup>3</sup> "La mise à la côte est facile; cette baie n'est qu'à soixante lieues de Dunkerque; le pays est jacobite; dix mille hommes nous appuieront; il n'y a pas de troupes réglées dans le comté. Établis sur ce point, nous couperions les communications entre l'armée anglaise opérant en Écosse et sa base de ravitaillement, et même la prendrions entre deux feus; elle serait mise en déroute avant même que de combattre." P. Coquelle, *op. cit.* p. 602.



watch kept by our cruising vessels of the Downs squadron became increasingly vigilant. Information from the various units enabled Vernon to report on October 8th that a large number of vessels of from 50 to 30 guns were assembling in the ports of Havre, Boulogne, Calais, Dunkirk and Ostend. At what point the landing would be attempted he did not try to predict, and his suggestion for meeting the threat was to form a light squadron of 50 and 40-gun ships which should be kept concentrated at a central position, which he suggested should be Hollesley Bay, and from thence move to any point where a landing was reported. Another squadron should watch the approaches to the Firth of Forth and the probable ports in Scotland. A close blockade of the enemy's ports he considered impracticable. "For my part," he wrote, "I have always looked upon pretending to block up the port of Dunkirk from their privateers getting out in the winter's time to be little better than the labour of the wise men of Gotham for hedging in the cuckoo; and therefore those cruisers that are under my orders have directions not to cruise in sight of them for their serving as beacons how to avoid them, which will keep them in more awe than if they knew where they were. Yet I think it must be a lucky chance if they should discover them in a long winter's night in their passing by them... and when once to the northward of our cruisers I don't know what is in their way between that and North Britain: and shall therefore give it as my opinion that the most prudent measure for the disappointing their sending succours to the rebels in Scotland is to detach a nimble squadron of ships and small vessels to watch their entrance into Edinburgh Firth or any of the ports on the eastern coasts of Scotland,... that being the only certain place for meeting with them." With this object in view Vernon urged that Byng, who was still on the Scottish coast whither he had gone in pursuit of the vessels which had escaped from Dunkirk, should be permanently stationed there, a proposal which the Admiralty accepted and directed Vernon to issue the necessary instructions. Byng<sup>1</sup> who was meanwhile returning from Scotland after an unsuccessful search for the French frigates reached the Downs on the 17th October, and was therefore despatched away again to Edinburgh within a few days; his return to blockade the Scottish coasts coincided with the resumption of Prince Charles's march southward. The overwhelming success at Prestonpans had so encouraged recruiting that the army now amounted to 6000 men with six guns and a valuable addition of French and Irish officers. With this army

<sup>1</sup> His squadron consisted of the 'Gloucester,' 50; 'Milford,' 44; 'Ludlow Castle,' 44; 'Fox,' 44; 'Glasgow,' 24; 'Saltash,' 24; 'Hazard,' 10.12; 'Raven,' 10.12; 'Shark' sloop and two armed vessels. Out letters, October 14th, 1745.

a plan of advance into England was begun on October 31st; Carlisle surrendered on November 17th, but though Preston, Wigan and Manchester welcomed the Prince they furnished but a mere handful of recruits<sup>1</sup>. The conquest of England was not to be achieved by this small force, which, unable to obtain its hoped-for reinforcements from France as the British squadrons stood in their way, was being surrounded by the British armies from Newcastle and Lichfield, already in superior force and growing stronger by the troops drawn from Flanders in virtue of the command of the waters between Helvoetsluys, the Thames and the Eastern ports of Britain.

*Ships employed on Home Defence. October 1, 1745<sup>2</sup>.*

(D signifies a Dutch ship)

(1) *Under Vernon.*

In Downs	...	...	...	...	3.90, 1.54 (D), 2 small
Going to Downs	...	...	...	...	2.44, 1.54 (D), 5 small
Off Flanders Coast	...	...	...	...	1.60, 1.44
In Channel between Beachy Head and Dungeness	...	...	...	...	1 small

*With Byng.*

Off Edinburgh and Berwick	...	...	...	2.50, 2.44, 1.54 (D), 3 small
Off Edinburgh and North Coast of Scotland	...	...	...	5 small
At Hull	...	...	...	1 small
On West Coast of Scotland	...	...	...	4 small

(2) *With Martin.*

Cruising in Soundings, to make the Lizard once in every 10 days	...	...	...	{ 2.90, 6.70, 1.60, 1.50, 1.44, 1.64 (D), 1.54 (D), 2 small
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(3) *Unattached (under Admiralty orders).*

Between Start and St Malo	...	...	...	1.60, 1.50, 1.44, 1 small
At Plymouth	...	...	...	2.60
Convoying transports from Holland	...	...	...	1.20, 1.54 (D)
Convoying empty transports to Holland	...	...	...	1.54 (D), 1.44
Despatch vessels for Duke of Cumberland	...	...	...	2 small
Carrying arms to Scotland	...	...	...	1 small
Cleaning at Sheerness	...	...	...	1.44, 2 small
At the Nore	...	...	...	1 small
Convoying East Indian ships	...	...	...	2.60
At Bremen (for King's baggage)	...	...	...	1 small
Attending Herring Fishery at Yarmouth	...	...	...	2 small
Protecting trade to Channel Islands	...	...	...	1 small
In St George's Channel	...	...	...	5 small
Attending on trade of Hull	...	...	...	1 small
Fitting out at various ports	...	...	...	1.80, 1.50, 4.44, 9 small

<sup>1</sup> Fortescue, *op. cit.*

<sup>2</sup> Report prepared by order of the Council, dated September 30th, in consequence of the preparations reported from Brest, Dunkirk and Ostend. *S.P. Dom Various V.*

The winter was now coming on apace. The Downs was no safe anchorage for the three-deckers, nor were the narrow seas suitable to their employment in bad weather. Vernon, who had already represented this, and also the need of keeping the western squadron constantly superior to the enemies' forces in their Atlantic ports, now at last had his proposals adopted<sup>1</sup>; the three remaining 90-gun ships were ordered to Portsmouth—a step, it may be observed, that was not taken by the Admiralty without asking the permission of the Privy Council<sup>2</sup>. They sailed for the westward on October 25th.

All through November the activity of the French at Dunkirk, Boulogne and Ostend continued, and the squadron in the Downs gradually grew in answer to the demands which were made upon it. These comprised the defence of the coasts of Kent, Essex and Suffolk, the observation of the enemy's ports from Calais to Ostend, and the protection of trade by convoy and cruising ships in the North Sea and eastern part of the Channel. The light squadron upon the coast of England which Vernon had recommended earlier, and to which he again returned in November<sup>3</sup>, was however not yet approved and he found it no easy task to fulfil all the services required with the squadron he had under his orders<sup>4</sup>. The Dutch ships could not be depended on for continuous service; their condition was bad and their supply of provisions continually deficient. Indeed, only a month later the Dutch applied to withdraw their last ten ships, notwithstanding they were engaged by Treaty to furnish twenty and had already reduced their quota by half; but this application was firmly and successfully withstood by the Admiralty and the Council. Strength was indeed imperative at this moment when the overthrow of England was being attempted, and two separate sets of military operations had to be guarded against. One was the sailing of small bodies of French troops, in single ships, to reinforce the Prince's army which by November 26th had already reached Preston; to prevent this a great number of small craft were needed. The other was the threatened invasion which would be made in a large body of ships, possibly escorted by ships of force,

<sup>1</sup> Vernon's letters on these points are numerous; he wrote on September 22nd, 25th, 27th, 28th and 30th; October 3rd, 5th, 6th and 7th.

<sup>2</sup> Minutes of the Privy Council, October 10th, 1745. Add. MS. 33004.

<sup>3</sup> Letters of November 5th, 12th and 27th.

<sup>4</sup> His squadron on November 18th was as follows:

In the Downs: 'Norwich,' 50; 'Ruby,' 50; 'Folkestone,' 44; 'Poole,' 44; 'Dordrecht' (D) 54; 'Ter Goes' (D) 60; 'Hornet,' 10.14; 'Hound,' 10.14; 'Weazel,' 10.16; 'Success,' 24.

Off Dogger Bank: 'Mary' galley, 44; 'Squirrel,' 20; 'Sheerness,' 24.

On coast of Flanders: 'Badger,' 10.14; 'Triton,' 24.

Three other Dutch ships—'Edam,' 'Leeuwenhorst' and 'Prince Friso'—were on their way to join Vernon in the Downs.

at any part of the south or east coast; this needed both ships of force and small craft in numbers to defeat it. How greatly the result of the military operations depended upon the navy was recognised by Pitt, who, speaking in Parliament on November 21st, gave his opinion that the only method of putting an end to the rebellion was to augment our naval force. Horace Walpole indulged in one of his typical sneers at the statement, but Pitt was right<sup>1</sup>. The army however had its share to do, and was doing it with all possible speed. The principal intention was to hasten the defeat of the rebels before the French could invade. Wade, who was proceeding from Newcastle by forced marches was kept informed of all the advices received from Dunkirk and elsewhere in Flanders, and urged to move with the utmost rapidity "that by the blessing of God he may have defeated the rebels before the French can put their design into execution<sup>2</sup>." The longer the French invasion and their reinforcements to Scotland could be held up, the better were the chances of obtaining a decision with the Jacobites before they arrived.

On December 3rd information was received that 15,000 troops were at once to be embarked in large vessels and the biggest of the fishing craft at Dunkirk. Orders were sent to Vernon to take measures to hinder the enemy and prevent them from landing, and his suggestion to establish a separate squadron to cover the mouth of the Thames and the coasts of Norfolk and Suffolk was at last put into operation. Commodore Thomas Smith, who commanded at the Nore with a broad pendant on board the 'Royal Sovereign,' was given a squadron of frigates, sloops and armed yachts<sup>3</sup>, with instructions to lie at the Gunfleet, Hollesley Bay, or Yarmouth Road, varying his station according to the information he should receive, and prevent troops from being landed on any part of that coast. If the enemy from Dunkirk should go to the northward he was to follow them and reinforce Byng; if they went to the southward he was to join Vernon in the Downs; and in all cases to keep in constant correspondence with both Admirals. The Commodore was also directed to act as he considered necessary in taking up the buoys in the river or removing the lights<sup>4</sup>. At the same time instructions were issued for erecting fire beacons along the coast from Cromer to Harwich<sup>5</sup>. The marines in the garrisons at Canterbury were

<sup>1</sup> Letters of Walpole to Mann, November 22nd, 1745.

<sup>2</sup> Minutes for a letter to Marshal Wade. Council Meeting, November 18th, 1745. *S.P. Dom. Various V*.

<sup>3</sup> 'Hastings,' 44; 'Ludlow Castle,' 44; 'Gibraltar,' 24; 'Success,' 24; 'Syren,' 24; 'Mortar,' 12-14; 'Speedwell,' 10-14; 'Granada,' 14-14; 'Hawk,' 8-12; 'St Quintin' (armed vessel) 16-6; 'William and Mary,' 'Charlotte,' 'Fubbs,' 'Chatham' and 'Queenborough' yachts which were armed with about 8 guns.

<sup>4</sup> *S.P. Dom. Naval*, 29.

<sup>5</sup> Out letters. Secretary of State, December 10th, 1745.



ordered to march at once to Sheerness, and those at Maidstone, Rochester and Chatham were directed to hold themselves in constant readiness for marching in accordance with any orders that might be sent from the Admiralty. Those in the 90-gun ships at Portsmouth<sup>1</sup>, which could not go to sea in the winter season, were ordered to be marched immediately to London<sup>2</sup>.

For the purposes of scouting, the Navy Board was ordered to hire as many Folkestone cutters as could be procured, and any four vessels of the transports lying in the river which drew little water were to be taken up and manned and armed<sup>3</sup>. All boats that would carry from 50 to 60 men were to be sent at once to the Nore and also all the customs vessels belonging to ports in Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex. Captain Boscawen was ordered to relieve Commodore Smith in the 'Royal Sovereign' and take command at the Nore, mooring her as a block ship, to stop any vessels that should attempt to ascend the river<sup>4</sup>.

Commodore Smith fully agreed that the Gunfleet and Hollesley Bay were the best stations in which to lie with his squadron. He further recommended an extension of the beacons from Harwich as far as Newcastle, placed five miles apart, and, if these had proper persons to attend and light them, "on the enemy's attempting to make a descent on any part of the coast," he said, "the signal general might be made in two hours' time, and before the enemy can have time to land, the squadron might slip and be up with them with a fair wind, though at 20 leagues distance,"—an interesting expression of opinion.

Smith's arrangements of his ships, sloops and small craft are described by himself as follows: "I have divided the small craft as attendants to each ship or sloop of war, and each ship of war has orders in case of meeting with any embarkations of the enemy to attack them in such a manner as they think can most effectually destroy them. In case any of the enemy call for quarters, the ship or sloop of war is to proceed on, and the small craft attending are to take possession of them till they have disabled their masts and thrown all their muskets and oars, if they have any, overboard, and then make the best of their way on to the ship or sloop they are to attend<sup>5</sup>." These small vessels carried

<sup>1</sup> 'Royal George,' 'Prince George' and 'Duke.' Each of these ships carried 100 marines.

<sup>2</sup> Letters regarding Marines, December 5th, 1745. Out letters, 1150.

<sup>3</sup> There were 90 transports in the river ready to bring over 4800 foot and 1200 horse of Hessian troops from Willemstadt to Edinburgh.

<sup>4</sup> Instructions dated December 4th, 5th and 6th, 1745.

<sup>5</sup> Commodore Smith to Secretary, December 22nd, 1745. Captains' letters. The groups were as follows:

'Hastings,' 20, with a smack and a cutter.

'Success,' 20, „ „ „ „ yacht.

up to 10 guns and were manned with from 30 to 90 men; they were taken up and fitted by Boscawen at the Nore and, each commanded by a lieutenant, were despatched to join Smith as soon as they were ready<sup>1</sup>. At the same time Vernon, who was in want of small vessels, took up on hire three Dover privateers, mounting about 20 guns each; fast, well armed and manned, and drawing only nine feet of water; these vessels were well suited to the service about the shoals of Dunkirk of which their captains had intimate pilotage knowledge<sup>2</sup>. The Admiral had also four Folkestone cutters for scouts, a number which gave him enough vessels for the various services of observation which he conducted from the Downs.

These arrangements at the Nore and Hollesley Bay had hardly been completed when the French began to move. On December 15th the news reached Smith that a force of the enemy had put to sea from Dunkirk. The Commodore at once detached the 'Mortar' and her smack to Dunkirk to look into the harbour, with orders that if the enemy were out and had steered to the northward the 'Mortar' was to hasten and inform Byng off Leith while the smack rejoined the broad pendant; but if they were steering towards Kent the 'Mortar' was to report to Vernon. When the sloop returned from the Flemish coast on the 18th, the news she brought was that the embarkation had sailed, but whether north or south could not be ascertained. In reporting to the Admiralty that until he knew more he did not intend to move from his present position, Smith hazarded the guess that they might be gone to attack Zeeland; but the Board considered this unlikely. "There is little probability," wrote the Secretary, "of the French attacking Zeeland or diverting any other ways the views they have upon his Majesty's dominions." Although at this moment Smith's guess was incorrect, he was only antedating the attack which was made about sixteen months later; on this present occasion the sailing was towards the French ports where the army and its train were assembling. Sixty small vessels with arms, stores, and ammunition on board had got to sea and were coasting down to Boulogne to assist in the embarkation of the army.

'Gibraltar,' 20, with a cutter and a yacht.

'Syren,' 20, " " " "

'Mortar,' sloop " " smack and an armed transport of 8 guns.

'Speedwell,' sloop with a smack and a sloop and a cutter.

'Salamander,' frigate with a yacht and a snow.

'Antwerp,' 14 " " " " }

'James and Mary,' sloop } independent.

<sup>1</sup> About nineteen of these craft were fitted out. One of them was commanded by the officer who afterwards became Sir Hugh Palliser. Captains' Letters, Boscawen, December 18th, 1745.

<sup>2</sup> These vessels were the 'Eagle,' Captain Barclay; 'York,' Captain Gravener; and 'Carlisle,' Captain Owen. Each of ten carriage and twenty swivel guns.

Unfortunately for the French flotilla it was sighted off Calais by two of Vernon's hired privateers, which at once chased into the mass. A scrambling action followed, the transports crowding for the shelter of Calais and Boulogne; and though the majority escaped, seventeen were put out of action, of which some were run ashore and blown up, some were sunk, and others were brought into Dover as prizes. The effect of this blow was to set Marshal Richelieu's face against any further attempts, and to put an end to all hopes of a successful invasion<sup>1</sup>.

For a time however a very real scare had been created. It had even been reported that the French had landed at Pevensey Bay, and though this rumour was contradicted within a few hours of its receipt, it was felt that there had been a narrow escape. "Their transports and barks were in readiness," wrote Lord Hardwicke to his son, "we had but a few ships in the Downs; and had it not been for the accidental dispersion and driving many of the enemy's transports and barks on shore near Calais the enterprize had probably been executed before now<sup>2</sup>." To call the dispersal "accidental" does less than credit to the officer in command in the Downs; it was due to his disposition of his cruisers that the flotilla was unable to pass in security from Dunkirk to Calais, and this is not a matter of accident, but of design. The movement of the French vessels did however suggest that another possibility besides landing upon the east coast was open to the enemy, and that the force now in the Downs was insufficient to provide a guard against an attempt upon the coast in the Channel, and so soon as the news of the engagement with the transports was received in London Admiral Martin was ordered to proceed at once with the 'Yarmouth' and all the other 60 and 50-gun ships from Plymouth to the Downs and place himself under Vernon's orders<sup>3</sup>. Vernon himself felt that the position was by no means secure on the south coast. He believed that the enemy's intention was to make a dash across to Dungeness when the wind was fair. If at the same time his own squadron were windbound in the Downs, as it would be with a S.S.E. wind, he believed the audacious attempt might be made with success, and he conveyed this opinion to Sir John Norris, then Governor of Deal Castle. The populace was thereupon called to arms and all able-bodied men were directed to assemble at Swinfield Minis in Kent bringing arms, ammunition, horses and

<sup>1</sup> *Projets de descente en Angleterre*, P. Coquelle. *Guerres sous Louis XV*, Pajol. "Memorial of Admiral Vernon." Captains' Letters, Knowles. *Journal of Admiral Vernon*.

<sup>2</sup> *Life of Lord Hardwicke* by P. Yorke.

<sup>3</sup> Orders of December 14th, 1745. It seems to have been mooted on December 11th. There is a note in Newcastle's writing, "Lords of the Admiralty spare ships from Plymouth for defence of coasts here," in the minutes of the council meeting of that day. *S.P. Dom. Various V*.

entrenching tools with them; by this means a force of about 4000 volunteers was quickly got together. Vernon with his small squadron prepared to move along the coast to the westward as soon as the wind served.

*The Force in the Narrow Seas. December 25th, 1745.*

*In the Downs.*

	Ships	Small frigates, sloops, etc.
'Monmouth*,' 70; 'Yarmouth,' 64; 'Tilbury,' 60; 'Princess Louisa,' 60; 'Nottingham,' 60; 'York,' 60; 'Norwich*,' 50; 'Ruby*,' 50; 'Falkland*,' 50... ..	9	
'Triton,' 24; 'Weazel*,' 10.16; 'Hinchinbrook,' 10.14; 'Vulcan,' 16.12; 'Pluto,' 16.12 ... ..	5	

*Proceeding to the Downs.*

'Princess Mary,' 60; 'Superbe,' 60; 'Defiance,' 60; 'Canterbury,' 60; 'Lion,' 60; 'Portland,' 50 ( <i>from Plymouth</i> ); 'Sunderland,' 60 ( <i>from Spithead</i> ) ... ..	7	
'Lizard,' 14; 'Syren,' 24; 'Speedwell,' 10.16; 'Salamander,' 16.12; 'Delight,' 8; 'West,' 7; 'Dolphin,' 6; 'Antwerp,' 8; and seven Custom House cutters... ..	15	

*Off Dungeness and Boulogne.*

'Saphire,' 44; 'Folkestone,' 44; 'Badger,' 10.14; 'Hornet,' 10.14; cutter 'Cholmondeley' ... ..	2	3
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*Off Dogger Bank.*

'Mary,' galley, 44; 'Squirrel,' 20 ... ..	1	1
---	---	---

*Off Dunkirk and Ostend.*

'Sheerness,' 24; 'Eagle,' 10.20 (privateer) ... ..	2	
--	---	--

*Off Gravelines and Calais.*

'Duke of Bedford,' 20 (privateer) ... ..	1	
--	---	--

*Off Boulogne.*

'Carlisle,' 10.20 (privateer) ... ..	1	
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*At the Gunfleet and Hollesley Bay.*

'Hastings,' 40; 'Convener,' 10.14; 'Mayflower,' 14.4; and 15 smacks, cutters and armed yachts ... ..	1	17
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*Refitting.*

'Earl of Sandwich' (privateer) ... ..	1	
Total	20	46

\* These ships sailed with Vernon next day to cruise off Folkestone and Dungeness.

Ships from Martin's squadron soon began to arrive on the westerly wind which was then holding. The 'Monmouth,' 'Falkland,' 'Tilbury' and 'Princess Louisa' anchored in the Downs on the 18th and Martin himself in the 'Yarmouth' on the 21st. A gale was blowing from W.S.W. so that no move was then necessary; but when the wind came round to N.E. on the 26th, Vernon, having shifted his flag on board the 'Monmouth,' weighed with a squadron of heavy frigates and small craft<sup>1</sup> and anchored off Folkestone, leaving Martin in the central position in the Downs with the remainder of the great ships, which were being

<sup>1</sup> 'Monmouth,' 70; 'Falkland,' 50; 'Norwich,' 50; 'Ruby,' 50; 'Saphire,' 44; 'Folkestone,' 44; 'Triton,' 24; 'Badger,' 10.14; 'Hornet,' 10.14; 'Weazel,' 10.16; 'Eagle' (privateer) and four or five cutters.



still further reinforced by others from the westward. The disposition of the ships and small craft which were allocated to the narrow seas, as it was on December 25th, is shewn in the table on p. 181.

Vernon cruised off Dungeness until the end of the year and returned to the Downs on January 2nd. His command was then brought to an end, and that night he hauled down his flag, transferred the command to Admiral Martin and came ashore in obedience to an order, dated December 26th, to that effect.

This sudden ending of Vernon's career—for after this he was not employed again—was due to the strong resentment he had expressed for some time at the manner in which he had been treated, and his dissatisfaction with the conditions of this command. The relations between the Administration and the Commanders afloat are matters of the highest importance; they affect operations more profoundly than nearly any other of the numerous factors which go towards the successful execution of the plans of a campaign. Disagreements between the Board of Admiralty and the Admiral in the Downs had already occurred, and the friction between Vernon and the Board was but a continuation of earlier differences.

At the time that Sir John Norris held the chief command, the question as to how far the powers of the Admiral extended in the appointment and preferment of officers under his command, had been a matter of dispute between the Admiral and the Board. Sir John in 1740 had granted a warrant to an officer in his fleet; but the Admiralty, disapproving this assumption of patronage, appointed another officer, whom, when he arrived, Norris declined to accept, and sent back to London. Norris was at that time of higher standing than any man in the service, and the Admiralty, after some correspondence, eventually acquiesced in his action, though they laid down that it was not to be a precedent, and asserted the rule that all appointments in home waters must emanate from Whitehall<sup>1</sup>. The matter, though closed for the moment, did not end there. Norris strongly objected to this restriction of the powers of a Commander-in-Chief, and in 1742 he wrote to the King<sup>2</sup> complaining that his authority was curtailed, since even in his position of Commander of the fleet he could not advance nor serve the officers under his command.

In the end of November 1745 Vernon in a similar manner had appointed a gunner to the 'Poole.' The Admiralty did not approve of his having done so and directed him to withdraw the warrant. In reply<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Seasonable advice from an Honest Sailor*, p. 132. Memorials and Reports, 1741.

<sup>2</sup> Diary of Sir John Norris. B.M. Add. MS. 28133, March 4th, 1742.

<sup>3</sup> Letter of December 5th.

Vernon cited the action of Sir John Norris in the similar case, and pointed out that in a parallel situation a military commander had the power of appointment to fill vacancies<sup>1</sup>, and that it was highly desirable that an Admiral in his position should have the same powers. The Admiralty declined to abandon their attitude and made their own appointment to the 'Poole'; on which Vernon remarked that it would be inconsistent with support of his honour and the dignity of his commission if he were to permit himself to be treated in this contemptuous manner. "That officer," he wrote, "that don't pique himself on supporting his own honour and the dignity of the commission he holds under his Majesty, may not be the likeliest to defend the honour of his Prince and the security of his country against the face of his enemies"; words almost identical with some he had used in 1741, when he had sent home from the West Indies an officer who had refused to fight a duel when challenged. For this reason Vernon informed the Admiralty that he proposed to follow the example of Sir John Norris and "not permit that indignity to be put on me while I remain in command here, but when he arrives [I] shall civilly send him back again."

This letter was written on December 13th, the day the news of the successful attack upon the French transports off Boulogne was received, and when the danger from the embarkations at the French ports was fully appreciated. Martin, as we have seen, was ordered next day to bring the 50 and 60-gun ships to join Vernon in the Downs. The coincidence of this action might be connected with the receipt of Vernon's turbulent letter, but for the evidence that it was clearly the strategical situation that dictated the movement; the Duke of Newcastle's note on the 11th further shews that it was brought forward on that date.

Martin arrived in the Downs on the 21st. The Admiralty, either intentionally or by neglect, had not informed Vernon that this reinforcement to his command was being sent. This would have been a most singular omission at any moment; but at that critical time, when the knowledge that a force of several large ships and frigates were about to join him might greatly modify his dispositions, it was particularly noticeable. Vernon's resentment, expressed in another letter

<sup>1</sup> See Wellington's complaints, when he was treated in the same way in 1810, that the power of reward, granted hitherto to every Commander-in-Chief in the field was denied to him; wherefore it was impossible for him to stimulate their zeal and energy (Fortescue, *History of the British Army*, vol. vii. pp. 192, 424). Lord Stair's remarks on the question are to the same effect (*ibid.* vol. ii. p. 88), also Stonewall Jackson, who, although not claiming the power to reward, insists that his recommendations should be acted upon (*Life of Stonewall Jackson*, vol. ii. pp. 374-375).

a few days later, at the manner in which he was being treated was natural. It is impossible to deny that on this occasion he had the fairest grounds for dissatisfaction.

On receipt of his letter the Board decided to remove him from his command. "You have in several letters," they wrote on December 26th, "expressed to us your dislike and dissatisfaction with the situation you are placed in, and an inclination to resign your command, which uneasiness and desire of resigning you have again repeated to us in your letter of yesterday's date; we have taken the same into our consideration and so in regard to your so often mentioned desire of laying down your command and that there is an experienced officer upon the spot to succeed you in it, signify hereby our content thereto."

That Vernon had expressed discontent with the circumstances of his command, and had asked leave to quit it is correct<sup>1</sup>. Nor indeed were his sentiments without justification. He was the senior admiral serving at sea. When he was first appointed in August he was given the supreme command in home waters, a position to which his rank entitled him. The command was a divided one, consisting of the Western squadron of great ships and the Eastern force of frigates and small craft. In the first instance he was ordered to command the more important squadron to the westward. But this order was revoked and he was transferred to the eastern end of the Channel, so that while the junior admiral commanded a considerable force of ships of the line, the senior commanded a force of a few large ships and an assemblage of frigates, sloops, privateers, yachts, Folkestone cutters and armed transports. Human nature being what it is, it is not difficult to understand that Vernon chafed at being placed in such a subordinate position, at this reversal of the established order of things. But for all this he complained but little at first, accepting the situation and contenting himself with making the most effectual use of the material under his orders, and giving the best advice he could as to improvements in the disposition of the naval forces. His offering of advice may perhaps have been unpalatable to the Duke of Bedford and Lord Sandwich, but it was the advice of an experienced seaman. Every proposal that he made was eventually adopted, other persons in most cases receiving the credit; this is so often the fate of those whose ideas march ahead of their times. The strong Western squadron was formed, the 90-gun ships were sent to the westward, the squadron under Byng was established on the Scottish coast, the flotilla under Smith was organised on the coast of

<sup>1</sup> *Vide* his letter of December 1st. "I must in such case intreat the favour of their Lordships to procure me his Majesty's leave to quit a command I have long thought too contemptibly treated, in regard to the rank I hold...."

Essex, and the Dover privateers, which eventually were instrumental in striking the blow that finally settled the invasion, were taken up. In short, it was in a great measure owing to the arrangements recommended by Vernon that the rising of 1745 ended as it did, and did not develop into an overthrow of the Protestant dynasty; though many repetitions of the advice had been necessary in each case before it was accepted. Yet for all this the Admiralty blackened the Admiral's character and represented that he had been removed from his command on account of the negligent manner in which he had executed the duties belonging to it. We have already seen how Newcastle in 1741 traduced Haddock in the matter of the escape of the Barcelona embarkation. So in 1745 the Board traduced Vernon. He, smarting under the aspersions, made an effort when he found himself on half pay to vindicate himself by publishing, under the title of *Seasonable Advice from an Honest Sailor*, extracts from his letters to the Admiralty, from which the public might judge whether or no his dispositions were well made or his force assiduously used. When the pamphlet containing these extracts appeared the Admiralty called on him<sup>1</sup> to admit or deny its publication. This Vernon did not do, and on the 10th April he was desired to attend the Admiralty Board, where he was called upon to answer "yes" or "no" as to whether he were the author. Vernon replied that he apprehended the Board were not within their rights in asking him the question and declined to give the categorical answer required; in consequence the Secretary informed him next day that on the advice of the Duke of Bedford, his name had been struck off the List of flag officers.

That Vernon acted intemperately in publishing the correspondence admits of no denial; but neither is there any possibility of denying that he had been treated in a contemptuous and improper manner when he was afloat, and in a cruelly unjust one after his retirement. That a high tempered, generously minded man should intensely resent this treatment is but natural; it is to be regretted that his resentment so far got the better of his discretion as to lead him to defend his conduct in the manner adopted. Right was on his side until he put himself in the wrong by his last action. Up till then he had a precedent for all his actions. Both Sir John Norris and Anson, the latter now a member of the Board of Admiralty, had behaved in a similar manner in the matter of appointments they had made, but Norris had not been broke and Anson's subsequent insubordination had been rewarded by a seat on the Board. Vernon did not possess the wealth of either of these officers nor did he belong to the political party in power, and while their

<sup>1</sup> Letters of March 25th and April 4th, 1746.



lapses from the rigid path of subordination were condoned, his was punished by removal from his command; and the insidious backbiters who are always to be found at the disposal of a corrupt Administration proceeded to blacken his character till he was goaded into committing the one incorrect action which gave the Minister an opportunity of striking him down.

Thus Vernon's career ended and Martin succeeded to the command in his room, with Perry Mayne as his second flag. The importance of the French preparations had fully impressed itself upon the Ministry. A considerable strength was now collected in the eastern end of the Channel with an increased flotilla cruising between the English and the Flemish and French ports. Although Richelieu had abandoned all expectation as to the practicability of the enterprise, Louis XV still hoped that an opportunity might present itself in which the passage could be effected<sup>1</sup>; he continued to despatch troops to the coast with the double object of taking advantage of any opening that might be made and of obliging the British Government to divert a large number both of ships and troops to the south-east corner of the country to deal with any attempt that might be made. The soldiery collected at Calais and Boulogne were thus playing their part in assisting the campaign of the Jacobite army in the North. Yet in spite of the deflection of force caused by the presence of these troops upon the French coast, we must not lose sight of the important part the navy was able to play in the campaign of 1745. The march of the Pretender and the series of military operations which began at Moidart and ended at Culloden would have been very different if Richelieu and his 15,000 men, or even a proportion of them, had been able to land either in Sussex, Yorkshire or Scotland. That they were unable to do so was owing to the presence and activities of the force of frigates, cutters, privateers, sloops and yachts whose operations extended from the Orkneys to Dungeness.

The disposition of the squadrons in the end of December was as follows. Martin, with a main body of four heavy ships and about seven<sup>2</sup> small craft, lay in the Downs ready to move in whatever direction his services were required. Admiral Mayne with four heavy ships and fifteen sloops and cutters used Dungeness as their rendezvous, the heavy ships and half the small craft lying on the English side of the Channel, the other small craft scouting along the French coast from Boulogne to the westward. Another squadron of two ships and seven

<sup>1</sup> *Projets de descente en Angleterre*, P. Coquelle.

<sup>2</sup> The number varied; the actual total was more but several were constantly absent repairing or refitting.



Boulogne

- A. The Pier head of 5 Guns
- B. a Battery of 2 Guns
- C. a New Battery of 4 Guns

clear Ground.

7 ft 6 in Water in Port  
at 1/2 Ebb.



If Ships can Anchor  
so far to Leeward  
as between these two  
Red lines they may  
Destroy most of the  
Embarkations.





small craft under Commodore Knowles<sup>1</sup> watched Dunkirk, Calais and Boulogne. Commodore Smith with his flotilla hovered about the Gunfleet and as high up the coast as Yarmouth to guard the Thames estuary and the coasts of Essex and Suffolk. Thus, if the enemy should evade the cruising ships which were endeavouring to keep their ports under observation, there were flotillas ready to receive them in the most important points of the coast, backed by ships of force, either of which could move at the shortest notice and attack the embarkations wherever they might make their descent.

This policy of watching and waiting was not at all to Knowles's taste. Always an advocate of active measures, he proposed a fireship attack upon the transports in Dunkirk, but neither Vernon nor Martin was in favour of it. Martin observed that the pilots would not take charge of any ships to run through Dunkirk Road, but Knowles considered we could make our own pilots by trying to get in there. "For my own part," he wrote privately to Anson, "let me once see the place and I won't ask any pilots what's to be done. But I am sure if the ships lays in the Downs nobody will make themselves pilots or do any other good, and the enemy will do as they please for all the cutters and armed vessels<sup>2</sup>." He obtained permission to go over, but he found that although it might be possible to burn the ships in Dunkirk Road, he could not get at those in the harbour; and also that Calais and Boulogne, where apparently the main force of troops was to be embarked, could not be forced; but he suggested bombarding the ports. The bad weather which followed prevented him from making a fireship attack on the ships in Dunkirk Road, but the Admiralty resolved to try and destroy the flotillas in the other two ports. On January 7th they learned from a French deserter that 15,000 troops were at Calais and Boulogne, with 230 sail of small craft for transporting them. The troops were to be landed between Beachy Head and Dungeness, and the whole organisation, so said the Frenchman, was in an advanced stage of completion. The soldiers had been practised in embarkation; every unit was told off for its vessel; each vessel had her number painted upon a black board in large letters so that there could be no confusion. These very circumstantial details indicated an early attempt to cross, and when, a few days later, a report came from Brest that ten sail of the line were ready there to come up Channel, to be reinforced by more from Ferrol and Toulon, there seemed no doubt

<sup>1</sup> Knowles had come round to the Nore in December in the 'Devonshire' and had been employed observing the French coast. He was given a broad pendant on January 2nd.

<sup>2</sup> Knowles to Anson, December 25th, 1745. Add. MS. 15956, f. 123.

but that the attempt was soon to be made. Knowles was therefore given the 'Tilbury,' two sloops, six smacks and all the small craft that could rapidly be got together, and ordered to go off the ports and endeavour to destroy the transports; at the same time Martin was told to be ready to concentrate his ships of force and be in a position to fall upon the enemy's squadron if it came up Channel<sup>1</sup>. A detached squadron<sup>2</sup> was formed and placed under the command of Captain Legge whose instructions ran as follows: "We have received frequent intelligence that the enemy have fitted out some ships of war at Ferrol and others at Rochefort in order to join more ships at Brest and form a squadron to come into the Channel and attempt an invasion of His Majesty's dominions; you are to have a particular care to prevent the said junction, and in order thereto to cruise on such stations in the Bay or off of Ferrol as you judge proper for that purpose, endeavouring by all means in your power to gain intelligence of what is doing in those ports, and if you get certain information that any number of ships are sailed to join those at Brest you are then to return with your squadron to Spithead."

Thus the regular course of affairs was being followed. The enemy having no ships of force to cover their passage the control of the narrow waters was being left to the frigates and small craft; an attempt was to be made to destroy the transports, which, like many other operations of the like kind, before and after, was found to be impracticable; and the great ships were being moved towards the area in which the similar vessels of the enemy were beginning to shew signs of activity<sup>3</sup>. For the next fortnight (January 12-26) uncertainty reigned. Advices were contradictory both as to the squadron at Brest and the number of vessels in the French channel ports, about which our Consul at Flushing wrote most alarmingly. Five French ships from Cadiz were reported to have joined four Spanish ships at Ferrol, from whence they were about to sail. The Brest squadron was one day said to be unready, and another day to have several ships completed. Thirteen sail of Spanish men-of-war were said to be preparing to sail to Scotland. Five sail of large French ships were reported to have been seen off Seaford—intelligence which caused Martin to collect his force and go in search of them; but, when found they turned out to be part of the Dutch squadron.

<sup>1</sup> Secret Instructions, January 9th, 1746.

<sup>2</sup> 'Captain,' 70; 'Prince Frederick,' 70; 'Nottingham,' 60; 'Augusta,' 60; 'Lyme,' 60; 'Falkland,' 50; 'Maidstone,' 50; 'Lizard,' sloop. Secret Instructions, January 12th, 1746.

<sup>3</sup> There is a very good picture of the situation as it appeared to an intelligent layman in touch with naval affairs in *Hist. Com. Report*, Papers of Lady du Cane, p. 84.

Gradually the news crystallised and became fairly certain. There was a large number of small craft in the French harbours and some larger ones at Dunkirk, but obviously not enough to undertake a serious operation; the Brest squadron, though fitting out, had four ships only actually ready, and these were destined to escort the Martinique trade. Martin was therefore ordered on January 27th to take the remainder of the 50 and 60-gun ships back to Plymouth to prepare for western cruising, and Mayne took command of the force in the Straits of Dover and the east coast—a command which he held only until the middle of February, when he was ordered to strike his flag and come ashore to take part in the Mathews Court Martial.

There is little more to tell of the operations in the narrow seas except a tale of small craft cruising, hard and thankless service for officers and men. The most notable event was the capture by Knowles, on February 21st, of two French ships, the 'Bourbon' and 'Charité,' having Count Fitzjames, his retinue and his regiment of 500 to 600 men on board. They had left Ostend with a third vessel to sail to Scotland with this reinforcement and one only got through, the smallest, with some 100 troops on board. Mayne was relieved by Commodore Matthew Michell, Knowles also came ashore, and the general disposition of the squadrons and flotillas between Beachy Head and the North in the early months of 1746 may be taken as representative of the method of coast defence, until Culloden removed all anxiety for the immediate security of the kingdom.

*Under Michell in the Downs.*

'Princess Louisa'	60	Downs
'Defiance'	60	
'Ruby'	50	Dutch coast
'Syren'	24	
'Badger'	10.14	Off Ostend
'Vulcan'	12	
'Swift' (privateer)		Off
'Salamander'	12.14	
'Squirrel'	20	Boulogne
'Swift' (sloop)	10	
'West' (armed vessel)	7	Ostend to
'Success'	24	
'Triton'	24	W. Caple
'Hornet'	10.14	Beachy Head to S.
'Eagle'	10.20	Foreland
'York'	10.20	
'Carlisle'	10.20	Refitting

*Under Smith at the Gunfleet and Hollesley Bay.*

'Hastings'	40
'Convener'	10.14
'Mayflower'	14.4
'Princess Mary'	6.10
'Whirlpool'	6.10
'Sarah & Mary'	smack
'John & Mary'	"
'Robert & Elizabeth'	"
'Royal Escape'	4.4
'James & Mary'	6.4
'John & Elizabeth'	smack
'Nacton'	"
(Supply hoy)	4.8
King's Yachts:	
'Fubbs'	8
'Wm & Mary'	8
'Charlotte'	8
'Mary'	8
'Catherine'	8

*Under Byng off Cromarty, the Orkneys and in the Firths.*

'Eltham'	44
'Bridgewater'	24
'Shark'	16.12
'Vulture'	16.12
'Exeter'	50
'Gloucester'	50
'Glasgow'	24
'Hound'	10.14
'Happy Jennet'	armed vessel
'Winchelsea'	24
'Shoreham'	24
'Scarborough'	24
'Sheerness'	24
'Port Mahon'	24
'Greyhound'	24
'Baltimore'	14.14
'Hazard'	10.12
'Speedwell'	10.14
'Serpent'	12.14
'Ursula'	16.6
'John & Ann'	16.6
'Ferret'	14.14



## CHAPTER IX

### WAR IN THE WEST INDIES AND NORTH AMERICA, 1744-1745

THE active participation of France in the war affected the operations in the West Indies from the points of view both of main and local strategy. So long as Spain was the only enemy, and colonial trade the main subject of the quarrel between that power and England, the strategy of the war had been directed towards attacks on the great commercial ports which acted as depots and rendezvous for the different sections of the Spanish overseas commerce. Attention had been given to Havana, Cartagena, Porto Bello, Chagres, Panama and Manila, all of varying degrees of importance to the trade. It is true that from the first the operations had to some extent been affected by the attitude of France, but until the end of 1741 that country took no active steps to assist Spain; or rather such steps as she had taken had had no appreciable effect and had not compromised her. In the end of 1741 she assisted to convoy the Spanish army to Italy, and in 1742 she not only joined Spain as an auxiliary in the attempt to dismember Austria, but extorted an engagement of neutrality from George II by means of a definite threat on Hanover. This situation could not long continue. Great Britain was bound by her engagements to assist Maria Theresa, and such troops as she could raise were required in the continental theatre of the war. No enterprise on any large scale could be undertaken in the West Indies without troops, and therefore offensive operations of the types of those of 1741 and 1742 were no longer possible, even if the Ministry, in face of the disastrous results of the expeditions already carried out, had felt inclined to repeat them. Nor could any great naval strength be detached to those waters, as the fleets of the allies in European waters had to be met with at least equal force on the part of Great Britain. The functions of the squadron in the West Indies assumed perforce a defensive character.

In the same way as the offensive strategy in the trade war with Spain was dictated by the character of the Spanish trade, so the manner in which the defensive duties of the navy in the new development of the war were carried out depended on the character of the British trade. The value of the trade was a factor in determining the amount of attention that must be paid to its defence. The routes it took, and the seasons at which the greatest volume was passing along those routes had also to be considered.

The value of the West Indian commerce was of the highest importance to this country. The principal oversea markets of Great Britain lay in the North American Colonies, the East and the West Indies. The value of the West Indian imports during the years from 1739 to 1748 averaged rather over  $1\frac{1}{2}$  million pounds annually<sup>1</sup>, of which a large proportion found its way direct into the Treasury in the form of import duties. The trade consisted principally of sugar, rum, molasses, coffee, cocoa, pimento, ginger, indigo and cotton; of these, sugar and its by-products formed by far the greatest part<sup>2</sup>. The harvest of the sugar cane began about January and extended until June, and these were in peace the busiest months for the transport of sugar to Europe, and constituted the season of the heaviest trade from all parts of the West Indies. The trade thus naturally divides itself into two categories, a principal one of sugar and its by-products which was limited to the period of harvest, and a minor one of the other commodities which sailed at intermediate times.

There were two main areas of trade,—Jamaica, and the Leeward Islands, Barbados being included in the latter area. In time of peace the home-going trade from Jamaica went either east or west of Cuba; but when war with Spain broke out the western track passed too near Havana for safety, and the route through the Windward Passage, although it was exposed to danger from the port of Santiago, had to be used. The Leeward Island trade collected in one of the Northern Islands, usually St Kitts; and both the Jamaica and Leeward Island fleets stretched away to the northward till clear of the trade winds. The whole trade from home took a common route, calling first at Barbados or Antigua, and then passing on to the various Leeward Islands, whence the Jamaica trade bore up and stood away for its destination.

Speaking generally the protection of this trade was effected in three ways—by oceanic convoy, local convoy and ships cruising in the terminal areas. The products of the sugar crop being all ready at about the same time—for the difference in the period of the ripening of the cane varied but little between the northern and southern islands—and forming the greatest and most valuable portion of the trade, were collected together in a large convoy and was conducted across the

<sup>1</sup> The total annual revenue of the United Kingdom at this time was about ten millions.

<sup>2</sup> As an example of the proportion the following imports from Barbados may be taken:

13,948 hogsheads of sugar of 15 cwt.  
12,884 puncheons of rum of 100 galls.  
60 hogsheads of molasses.

4667 bags of ginger.  
600 bags of cotton.  
327 gourds of aloes.

Bryan Edwards, *History of the West Indies*.

Atlantic all the way to its destination by oceanic escort. One large convoy carrying so much of the crop as was ready was made up about June, and another after the hurricane season in the end of September. Two or more men-of-war escorted these sugar fleets on the whole journey, reinforced in the western area by some ships of the local squadron which saw them clear of the danger area. The convoys were met by the cruiser squadrons in the Soundings who saw them into safety at the home end of their voyage.

At intervals between the sailing of these large fleets, lesser fleets sailed carrying such produce as was periodically ready, and these would be escorted through the danger area only. When in the open sea they proceeded alone until they came under the protection of the western cruisers in the Soundings. There was also the local inter-colonial trade between the Islands and the North American colonies, which was by no means inconsiderable. For this escort was not usually provided; it was exposed principally to the attacks of privateers which lay in wait in the passages or off the harbours used by the shipping, and extended their operations as far north as lat. 34°; its defence was furnished by single patrol ships, working in the parts known to be frequented by the privateers.

As the privateers were numerous they could hang off all the ports of arrival, to guard every one of which was beyond the powers of the squadrons. Warren, in a letter of February, 1745, urged restricting and well guarding landfalls. "One of the great causes," he wrote, "that so many of our vessels coming into these seas fall into the enemy's hands is the different routes they take. If those bound to the Leeward Islands and Jamaica would make the main body of Antigua, that avenue could be constantly guarded as well as Barbados. I believe it will be difficult to bring the trade to such a regulation tho' for their own safety, and while they continue to act as they do at present were the whole British fleet employed here for their protection only they could not secure them from falling into the hands of the enemy<sup>1</sup>."

Finally, a certain amount of merchandise was carried in ships which sailed singly for England—"runners"—taking their own risks.

Escorts for grand convoys were provided by the ships that had brought outward convoys or by others returning to England to refit, the places of the latter being taken by the ships escorting the West India fleets from England; in this way the convoy system was made to work in with the reliefs of the local squadrons. The local escorts were provided by the ships of the squadron, and might consist of two

<sup>1</sup> Captains' Letters. Warren, 1745.

to four ships, from ships of the line down to 20-gun frigates. The cruising ships which operated in the straits and off the landfalls were of all classes, ships of the line as well as frigates, sloops and cutters, and not infrequently it became necessary for the Admiral to hire local privateers to supplement his cruising ships. In addition to all these measures for their safety, the merchantmen were expected to be able to protect themselves to some extent; most of them were armed and were capable of offering a stout resistance to the smaller privateers<sup>1</sup>.

When the Admiral had sufficiently provided for the above services for the defence of the trade he could turn his eyes towards attack of that of the enemy<sup>2</sup>. The French trade was of the same character as the British. Its two main sources lay one in the west end of Hispaniola and the other in the French Leeward Islands, the homeward bound tracks of which corresponded in the Caribbean Sea with those of the Jamaica and the Leeward Islands trades. The whole outward bound French trade made its landfall at Guadeloupe or Deseada, that part destined for Hispaniola parting company at Martinique. At the beginning of its voyage it collected at Rochelle or Ile d'Aix whence it was accompanied into the sea by the Rochefort squadron, and when clear of danger proceeded under the care of such ships as were allocated for its escort. An agreement appears to have been made between the merchants and the King by which six men-of-war were hired to the merchants for the convoy of each fleet, three of these remaining with the Leeward Island trade and three going on to Hispaniola<sup>3</sup>. The French merchants paid the King eight per cent. for their protection, a custom which in the end was ruinous to France. As the King depended on these revenues, so his ships were principally employed for this service, and few were to be spared to attack the British squadrons or take a part in the military operations in Europe; and though the convoy system served its purpose in the West Indies where the British squadrons were weak and were as a rule unable to keep large enough cruising detachments at sea to contend successfully with the French escorts, in home waters the security of the trade fleets depended to a great extent on evasion. A strong Western Squadron was a more effectual weapon against French trade or French expeditions against the colonies than scattered detachments, none individually strong enough to produce any marked result. Towards the end of the

<sup>1</sup> Though Chaloner Ogle complained that some of them surrendered too easily. The French merchant ships were also armed.

<sup>2</sup> The instructions at this period put the defence first, and clearly laid down that was the principal object of the squadron, though it did not exclude the offensive.

<sup>3</sup> See *post*, p. 231.



war when the Western Squadron was strengthened and the actions of Anson and Hawke had demonstrated the difficulty of evasion, insurance premiums on French ships sailing without escort were from 30 to 35 per cent., for those with escort they were very little smaller<sup>1</sup>.

The principal part of the operations in the West Indies after the declaration of war by France was concerned with the putting into practice of these general principles of trade defence. The first indication that the long-threatened rupture was about to take place, if indeed it had not already done so, was brought to Barbados by the 'Biddeford,' 20, which arrived in Carlisle Bay on the last day of February, 1744.

The news brought by the frigate was that the whole Brest squadron had been met at sea on January 29th beating up Channel against an easterly wind. The 'Biddeford' had been in company with the 'Kinsale,' 44, escorting a West Indian convoy bound for Barbados. Sailing from Plymouth on January 28th, and standing to the W.S.W. with the wind at E.S.E., the convoy sighted a fleet ahead of them close hauled on the starboard tack at 8 o'clock on the following morning. At first it was believed to be a homeward bound fleet of West India ships, but strangers being suspicious persons the convoy was ordered to haul upon a wind while the 'Kinsale' stood on towards them to make sure. After about half-an-hour it was plainly seen that the ships were men-of-war, and their identity was not long after established by the fact that their quarters and quarter galleries were painted red, a distinguishing mark, as Brodrick had reported, of the Brest squadron. The convoy was immediately ordered to make all sail upon a wind to the southward. The French tacked and stood after them, and soon captured one of the leewardmost ships, who, careless after her kind, had taken no notice of the signal to haul up. A smart chase followed until dark. The 'Kinsale,' who had approached very close to the enemy, was hard put to it to escape, and when darkness fell she found herself separated and out of sight of her convoy, which with the 'Biddeford' had subsequently run to leeward and got past the French. The captain of the 'Kinsale' then called his officers in consultation. The orders as to not leaving a convoy were definite, but in this case the convoy had gone out of sight and there appeared no chance of rejoining it again in the dark. In view of the importance of the information that the French fleet was at sea and plying up Channel it was agreed that the Admiralty ought to know it immediately; the 'Kinsale' therefore hauled her wind and carried the news to Plymouth. The 'Biddeford' with the remainder

<sup>1</sup> Parliamentary Debates. The French ships were nearly all insured by British underwriters. A Bill was brought in in 1747 to stop this practice.

of the convoy proceeded on her way to Barbados, arriving there as we have already seen on February 29th.

This attempt upon the convoy shewed that war might already have begun. Warren, who was at that time in the southern part of the West Indies according to arrangement, on his own responsibility at once issued orders to seize French ships at sea<sup>1</sup>—an action which subsequently hampered the enemy greatly in fitting out privateers. It was not until May 22 that the declaration of war reached Antigua. Then all French ships in British harbours were taken, and a rigorous blockade of the French islands was begun. So effective indeed was the ubiquitous cruising of the British squadron among the islands that a famine was nearly produced in Martinique in these early months of the war<sup>2</sup>.

Warren remained on the station until May, when he shifted his pendant back on board the 'Launceston' and returned to New York, in accordance with his instructions.

Knowles, who had been ashore during Warren's commodoreship, busying himself with matters of local defence, now resumed command of the 'Superbe'; but as the defensive works were not yet finished he shifted his pendant on board the 'Woolwich,' which needed careening, and sent the 'Superbe' to sea cruising, "finding," he says, "my stay absolutely necessary to fortify the harbour and to give further directions for carrying on the works<sup>3</sup>." He erected a 10-gun battery on the point of English Harbour opposite the fort, and another of 20 guns in Freeman's Bay "which I think," he wrote, "will be sufficient defence for this place against any attempt that can be made by sea." This was all very characteristic of Knowles. Perhaps because he had taken part in so many bombardments of fortified harbours,—more, probably, than any of his contemporaries—he invariably recognised the value of even a small fortification in securing a harbour against a minor naval attack, though he never doubted the power of a squadron of heavy ships to beat down fortifications if they could get close enough. His first proceeding, wherever he commanded, was to secure his base against a *coup-de-main* from the sea; at the same

<sup>1</sup> Three Spanish and 21 French ships were taken between February 12th and June 12th, 1744, valued at about £250,000. *London Gazette*, August 7th, 1744.

<sup>2</sup> "The taking so many prizes was the cause that at Martinico bread rose to 20 pence a pound, meat to 30 pence, wine to 200 livres a barrel and flour 150, and scarce any to be had at that price; so that the Governor of Martinico had issued out orders for turning a certain proportion of all cane lands into provision ground, for planting manaoc and other kinds of grain for bread." *London Gazette*, August 7th, 1744.

<sup>3</sup> Journal of Admiral Knowles, May 27th, 1744. Warren had urged Governor Mathews to put up proper defences on April 20th (Captains' Letters, W. 1744).

time he invariably emphasised the limitations of the defence by defining the functions of the forts as intended to secure the place from sudden naval attack only; against combined attacks on a larger scale he knew they could not provide security. It was the business of the fleet to see that no such attack took place.

Knowles now kept all his ships, both great and small, cruising, and established a convoy system in working order. The first great convoy, consisting of 85 sail of merchants, sailed on 17th June under the care of the 'Superbe,' 'Severne,' 'Otter,' 'Scarborough' and 'Lyme.' This whole squadron accompanied the convoy as far as 400 miles north of St Martins, after which the 'Scarborough' and 'Lyme' carried it to lat. 34°, to be clear of privateers; the 'Lyme' then returned to Antigua, and the 'Scarborough'<sup>1</sup>, who was overdue to return home, proceeded with it to England.

The remainder of the operations of the Leeward Island squadron during this year were concerned with the attack on French trade. Cruising with the bulk of his ships<sup>2</sup>, Knowles held up the whole trade of Martinique where a fleet of over 150 sail lay in the carenage, laden but unable to sail. In July his boats performed a smart service in burning three sloops in store off Guadeloupe; and in September, receiving news that a French squadron was expected, he collected his heavier<sup>3</sup> ships together and cruised to windward of the French islands to intercept it. The rumour proved incorrect and no French squadron came that way during this year. A very gallant blow was struck in Artois Bay on the 1st October when the boats of the squadron drove a French 24-gun ship ashore and then burnt her under the very walls of the batteries in spite of a heavy musketry fire.

Warren, who was reappointed Commander-in-Chief on October 16th, returned in the beginning of December to Barbados whither Knowles was about to proceed to meet him when he heard that five Spanish ships, two of them of 60 guns, were about to sail from Puerto Cabello laden with cocoa and treasure, with the intention of passing between the west end of Porto Rico and Hispaniola. Sending the 'Superbe,' 'Lynn' and 'Severne' to cruise in that strait to intercept them, he shifted his flag into the 20-gun ship 'Lyme,' and in her went down and met Warren on the 13th December, and the two commanders returned together to Antigua.

The interception of the Spanish ships was ill-performed. One of

<sup>1</sup> She was relieved by the 'Biddeford,' which had brought a convoy out from England.

<sup>2</sup> 'Superbe,' 'Lynn,' 'Deal Castle,' 'Woolwich,' 'Fame,' 'Sea Horse,' and 'Severne.'

<sup>3</sup> 'Superbe,' 'Argyle,' 'Severne,' 'Woolwich,' 'Lynn.'

them ran into St Francis Bay, at the west end of Porto Rico, and was left there, and Knowles at once collected some ships and went down to destroy her. He took with him the 'Superbe,' 'Severne,' 'Lynn,' two sloops and a zebeck, and on arrival, seeing how the Spaniard was lying, he turned his two sloops into fireships, primed them and joined them together with a chain to drop down across the enemy's hawse and burn her. The place, however, proved full of shoals, he had no pilot, two of his ships ran ashore, and he could get no nearer than random shot, as the enemy warped close in under the protection of three batteries. Knowles therefore abandoned the attack, and returned to Antigua.

To sum up the operations of the Leeward Island squadron during the first eight or nine months of the war with France: Martinique had been blockaded, the French trade had been ruined, and the British trade had been adequately protected. No need had so far been felt for more heavy ships in this part, and the rescission of the order to send the 'Boyne,' 'Burford' and 'Suffolk' in consequence of the needs in European waters had done no harm to West Indian interests.

On the Jamaica station, where Ogle still commanded, the first year of war with France was even more uneventful than in the Leeward Islands. The news of the Brest squadron's behaviour was brought on from Barbados by the 'Biddeford,' which arrived at Jamaica in the end of March. Ogle immediately called in all his cruising ships in anticipation of the rupture he saw impending. Meanwhile the Havana squadron had put to sea without his knowledge, since he had no cruisers on the north side of Cuba, all his ships being kept close to Jamaica. On March 21st he received a report from private sources that it had left Havana some weeks since, confirmation of which was brought him on May 8th, when the 'Montagu,' Captain Chambers, sent a sloop to Port Royal with news of having sighted a Spanish squadron of nine large ships and a frigate off the Tortuga Bank on April 3rd. Chambers was chased, and escaped. But he captured a tender which had become separated from the squadron from whose master he learned that the squadron was that of de Torres and had been cruising in those parts for forty-five days. The station was the regular one for meeting the trade from Vera Cruz, and a large treasure fleet was soon to sail for Europe; it was evidently for its protection that the Spaniards were cruising. Chambers sent in a small craft to Ogle to give him this information that he might intercept the homeward bound fleet, but the expectation of a rupture with France obliged the Admiral to keep his squadron together ready to take action so soon as war should be declared<sup>1</sup>. At the time he was still short of

<sup>1</sup> Letter of May 8th, 1744.



several of his ships which were not yet back from cruising; and the probabilities appear to have been that by the time he had reached Havana, if he should endeavour to intercept the Havana squadron, they would already be gone.

Further news as to the French intentions was not long in coming. The 'Rippon,' cruising off Hispaniola, captured a French vessel, and among her papers found a despatch, dated March 11th, from Maurepas to de Larnage, the Governor of Hispaniola, advising him that war was about to be declared. On the 30th of May the 'Drake' sloop arrived from England with the orders for the declaration of war.

In accordance with his instructions Ogle at once conferred with Trelawny as to what should be done. The reduction in the squadron, the shortness of the complements of the ships and the protection of trade and of Ruatan<sup>1</sup> made, in their opinion, any active operations against the French impossible. Léogane, which Ogle and Trelawny had previously thought of attacking, had been strengthened, and its garrison increased to 1500 or 2000 men; sufficient troops were not available to attack it. The other French forts were too strongly defended for any attempt to be made on them—indeed, Ogle must have had enough of attacks on forts after Knowles's experiences at La Guayra and Puerto Cabello—and it was decided to take the squadron to sea and harass French trade on the south side of Hispaniola. As only five ships<sup>2</sup> were available and ready for sea, there was little else they could do; with these Ogle sailed on June 3rd and cruised for a month, but failed to meet any of the enemy. Bad weather and damage aloft then obliged him to bear up for Jamaica, leaving two ships to cruise between Cap François and West Corcasses, and two between Cape Tiburon and Cape Alta Vela, "as I judged these stations," he wrote, "the most likely for annoying the enemy and the better discovering and gaining intelligence of any of their ships or squadrons coming into these seas, and also for the greater safety and protection of our trade bound to this island." His squadron was now in a wretched state; of ten ships of the line, four only were in a fit condition to keep the sea.

The French were pursuing a policy in regard to the employment of their sea forces similar to that of the Spaniards. Squadrons of from two to five ships were sent out to convoy their trade, but neither power employed their fleets as factors in the grand strategy of the war.

<sup>1</sup> Ogle referred to "the necessity that occurs at present of dividing the squadron on account of the merchants' importunities and the supporting of Ruatan." Ogle had recently been obliged to give way to the pressure brought on him by the merchants to send the 'Falmouth' to cruise off the Main, which meant a reduction of two ships, allowing for her relief.

<sup>2</sup> 'Cumberland,' 'Oxford,' 'Prince of Orange,' 'Montagu,' 'Greenwich.'

Although the armies of France and Spain were being used in conjunction with each other the fleets were not, but each power frittered away its navy in detachments for defending trade by convoy; and except in so far as a certain amount of damage was done each year to British seaborne commerce—which was approximately balanced by the captures made—the fleets of France and Spain had little direct effect. Indirectly however their pressure was felt. The presence of their squadrons made it necessary for the British ships to keep together, and the action of the privateers, at whose hands the British trade chiefly suffered, was facilitated. Moreover the British Admirals were constantly misled by the movements of the foreign squadrons. They were in the habit of believing that a true military use would be made of their enemies' sea forces, and they acted accordingly. Thus, if a squadron put to sea from Cadiz, it was generally assumed that its intention was to form a junction with another at Ferrol, Brest, Toulon or in the West Indies, and measures were taken to frustrate such an action. The strategical insight of the British commanders shewed them so clearly wherein lay the possibilities of the situation, and how by cooperation the allies could make matters difficult for them, that they were misled again and again by the very fact that no deep laid intentions underlay the sailing of these scattered squadrons; the result was that a cautious reserve governed their proceedings for a long time, and risks which were legitimate were not taken. This is only one of the many examples furnished by history of the constant error made by a belligerent of mistaking as offensive movements of the enemy which are really only intended to be defensive.

Ogle, however, was at this time in no position to take risks with his weak force. He remained at Port Royal and did not move for the rest of the year. In September the news that two French ships of the line—the 'Neptune' 76, and 'Fleurion' 64—were at Port Louis caused him to send three ships to cruise off Cap François to intercept the and the homeward trade; but the ships were not seen, and the detachment returned to Jamaica on the report that four French men-of-war were shortly expected to arrive. The ships were then reinforced and an eye kept on Port Louis and Cap François, but nothing was seen of French men-of-war during the remainder of the year.

In October a violent hurricane struck the West Indies, and Jamaica in particular, which crippled the squadron. One ship was sunk and others severely damaged, and the end of the year saw the Jamaica squadron in a sadly disabled state and unable to undertake any offensive service. In the meantime de Torres sailed from Havana with four large ships and arrived safely at Coruña in the middle of January.

In February, 1745, Ogle, who had been out for over four years, was relieved by Vice-Admiral Davers. The new Commander-in-Chief brought with him the 'Cornwall' 80, 'Strafford' 60, 'Enterprise' 44, and a sloop; but this constituted no reinforcement, for Ogle took home the 'Cumberland' 80, 'Montagu' 60, 'Rippon' 60, 'Assistance' 50, and 'Experiment' sloop. Both the outcoming and home going Admirals escorted merchant fleets. The protection of trade was now the principal consideration of the Admiral commanding in these waters, and even this duty alone taxed the resources of Davers's small force to the utmost. The disposition of the squadron in April gives an indication of the method adopted by Davers to protect trade.

Off Cap François	'Strafford' 80
Off Ruatan	'Plymouth' 60
On Convoy	'Enterprise' 40, 'Rippon' prize 20
Off the Bastimentos	'Falmouth' 50
Off west end of Jamaica	'Merlin' sloop
In Windward passage	'Drake' sloop
Off east end of Jamaica	'Blast' bomb
In Port Royal	'Cornwall' 80, 'Prince of Orange' 70, 'Adventure' 44, 'Seahorse' <sup>1</sup> 20, 'Biddeford' <sup>1</sup> 20, 'Basilisk,' bomb

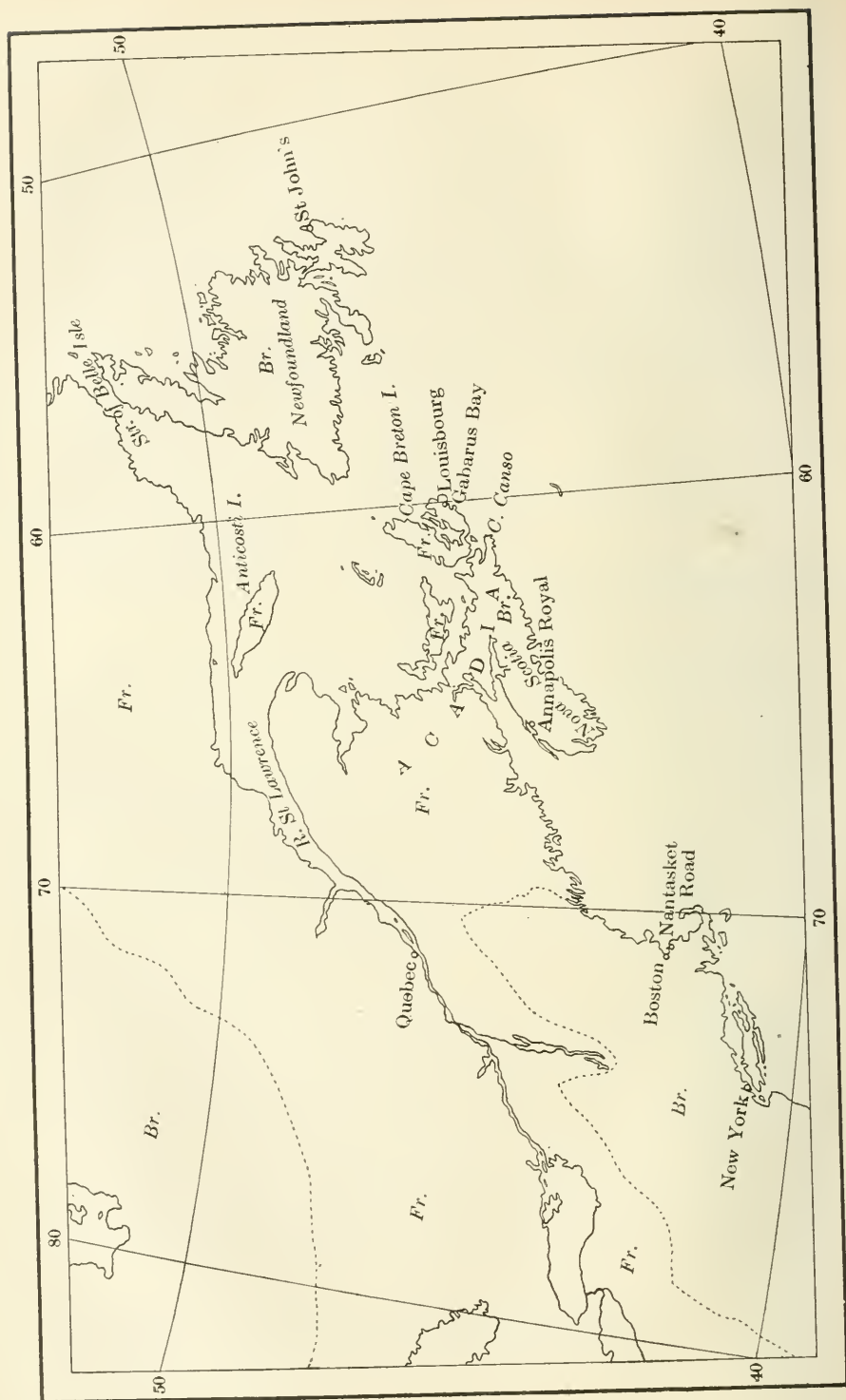
Davers had thus only four ships of the line and three heavy frigates. The Spaniards in the meanwhile were in greater strength. Six ships came out from Europe in April and joined the squadron at Havana, bringing the Spanish force up to 15 available sail. On their way they nearly captured the 'Strafford,' which was then cruising alone off the north side of Hispaniola. The situation created by this accession of strength caused Ogle great uneasiness, and in consequence he sent the 'Experiment' home with all haste to inform the Admiralty, and to point out the weakness of his force; but unfortunately the situation in the Channel at the time of her arrival admitted of no strengthening of foreign squadrons.

On the North American Station however a more enterprising policy was now in hand. The news of the declaration of war by France reached Canada before it reached Boston. The French at once began a movement to recapture Acadia, which had been ceded to England by the Treaty of Utrecht. A force of about 600 French and Indians, under the command of M. Du Vivier, invaded the province, captured Canso, and early in August invested Annapolis which was held by a small garrison under Major Mascarene. Although the fortifications of this, the only foothold of England in the province, had been neglected and

<sup>1</sup> Refitting. The other ships were required to relieve those cruising. The 'Greenwich,' 50, 'St Albans,' 50, a sloop and a bomb had been lost at Jamaica in the hurricane, and the 'Oxford,' 70, on Inagua Island.







THE APPROACHES TO QUEBEC

allowed to fall into disrepair, the defence was successful. Du Vivier had expected naval help, in the shape of the 'Caribou' and 'Ardent' which lay at Louisbourg, but the French naval commanders declined to cooperate in the expedition, having no orders from their home Government<sup>1</sup>. In the meantime Shirley, the Governor of Massachusetts, despatched relief to the garrison, and encouraged the belief in a rumour that a secret British expedition was on its way from the West Indies to attack Canada<sup>2</sup>. Du Vivier, disappointed in his hopes of reinforcement, and, doubtless, affected by the rumour as well as by the relief afforded from Boston, raised the siege in the end of September, but the Assembly of Massachusetts fully expected that another attempt on Annapolis would be made in the following spring. Since Acadia had been in British hands little had been done towards making its tenure secure. There had been no encouragement of English immigration, and the local population had remained attached to the country of their origin, so that the soldiers of the garrison of Annapolis were the sole representatives of Great Britain in the province; and they, to all intents and purposes, were prisoners within their fort. Threatened on land by the Canadians and their allies of the Indian tribes and on sea by Louisbourg, Annapolis was in a precarious situation, and might, if the siege were renewed, at any time be cut off and starved into surrender. Its fall would have been followed by the loss of the whole of Nova Scotia. The eyes of the people of Massachusetts, the nearest neighbours of the province of Acadia, were therefore turned to Louisbourg, the harbour of Cape Breton Island.

The fortress of Louisbourg had been brought into being as a consequence of the cession by France in 1713 of Placentia, in Newfoundland, and Acadia, when the islands at the mouth of the St Lawrence passed unconditionally into French hands. Standing at the mouth of the great waterway leading to the heart of Canada it had long been recognised as a place of high importance. Not only did the whole trade of the country pass along the St Lawrence<sup>3</sup>, but any military attack upon the great French colony must, in its major part, be made by the same route. While an active and sufficient naval force, based upon a position so favourably situated, could render insecure the communications of any hostile expedition, or oblige an enemy attempting to blockade the river to expend a very disproportionate force, it could at the same time

<sup>1</sup> Parkman, *A Half Century of Conflict*.

<sup>2</sup> "A report that I did not think fit to discourage at that juncture." Shirley to the Admiralty, September 23rd, 1744. In letters, Colonial Series.

<sup>3</sup> In September, 1744, Shirley reported that 25 ships belonging to Boston alone had been taken by Louisbourg privateers since May; but this loss was at least well-balanced by the capture of 40 prizes by the Boston privateers.

threaten the coasts of the British Northern Colonies and injure them in their two greatest interests—the trade and fisheries. Thus, both offensively and defensively the base of Louisbourg was supremely valuable. Through possession of it the French hoped to secure their own territories and drive the British from the fishery of the Banks; while at the same time by supporting the French fishery and fostering the production of seamen it served as one of the sources of sea power. It was an entrepot for French oversea trade, a port of call for ships not only from the West, but also the East Indies. Its loss, as Canadians clearly saw, would be disastrous, and involve also the loss of the whole of their possessions in North America; and all this was no less obvious to the keen-sighted and ambitious British Colonists. Louisbourg, as both American and Canadian could see, was the key to Canada<sup>1</sup>.

The capture of Louisbourg had been recommended by Warren before the French war broke out. Writing in February, 1743, he had expressed the opinion that the dispossessing the French of Canada and Cape Breton “would be of greater consequence to Great Britain than any other conquest we may hope to make in a French or Spanish war<sup>2</sup>,” and had suggested that the situation in the northern colonies made the present moment highly favourable for the undertaking. The colonial authorities were not less foreseeing. In 1741 Governor Clark of New York had made the suggestion; his predecessor had done so before him; and Kilby, the agent for Massachusetts in London had also recommended it in Aug. 1743<sup>3</sup>.

The rumour propagated by Shirley of an intended attack on Cape Breton by an English force may have reached France, but the French Ministry had naturally recognised the likelihood of such an attack, and preparations were made in France towards the end of 1744 to reinforce the garrison and replenish the stores in the fortress. News that these reliefs were going to be sent reached Shirley, and he hastened to inform the Admiralty<sup>4</sup>. On December 7th he wrote reporting that storeships were going to sail from France with supplies and reinforcements in February, and to point out that their interception

<sup>1</sup> Since the following account was written two new and important books on Louisbourg have appeared—*Louisbourg from its foundation to its fall, 1713–1758*, by J. S. McLennan, and *The Great Fortress* by William Wood. In revising proofs I have availed myself of both these authorities, to whom I make grateful acknowledgment.

<sup>2</sup> Warren to Secretary of Admiralty, February 6th, 1743. Captains' Letters.

<sup>3</sup> McLennan, *op. cit.* pp. 130, 131.

<sup>4</sup> It is to be noticed that the Governors of the colonies were in the habit of corresponding directly with the Secretary of the Admiralty on matters connected with their maritime defence.

would be a killing blow to the enemy and a protection to Annapolis; adding the hint that Louisbourg was very badly garrisoned by insufficient and discontented troops<sup>1</sup>.

The people of Massachusetts, on their side, did not fail to notice the opportunity offered by the unreadiness of the place. In response to an application made by a number of the inhabitants, Shirley proposed to the General Assembly that Louisbourg should be captured. Enquiry into the feasibility of the scheme was at once set on foot. A committee was formed, persons who had been traders and prisoners there were examined, and, after first rejecting the proposal at a meeting on January 9th, a decision was made on January 25th, 1745, to fit out an expedition and capture it<sup>2</sup>. To have waited for a force from England would have involved throwing away the advantages offered by the condition of the place. It was possible the Admiralty might be induced to send ships to intercept French supplies, and, with this help from England and with further assistance from the West India squadrons it was considered the fortress might be taken by surprise before it could be further strengthened.

This decision made, the Duke of Newcastle was at once informed; and at the same time Shirley wrote to Sir Chaloner Ogle at Jamaica and Commodore Warren in the Leeward Islands asking for the assistance of as many ships as could be spared from their stations. Preparations were at once set on foot locally. Shirley arranged to raise 3000 troops by the beginning of March, to engage the services of local privateers and sloops, and to purchase a vessel of 400 tons for the protection of the forces in transit and for the blockade by sea; and a Committee set to work to organise the troops and get everything ready.

In his letter to Ogle, Shirley pointed out that the success of the expedition must depend on its being reasonably supported by a naval force. He urged that the success would be attended by great advantages to the Crown, and to the trade not only of the northern plantations of America, but even of Great Britain itself "by securing to his Majesty the Fortress of Annapolis Royal and the whole Province of Nova Scotia;" and he asked the Admiral to provide such a naval force as would make it possible to block the approaches by sea and prevent the

<sup>1</sup> Shirley to Admiralty, December 7th, 1744. Received January 15th, 1745. For the condition of the defences and garrison, cf. McLennan, *op. cit.* chaps. VII and VIII.

<sup>2</sup> Shirley to Chaloner Ogle, January 29th, 1745. Shirley in this letter describes the decision as being a "cheerful and almost unanimous" one; but this would appear to be a slight exaggeration, as the proposal was carried by one vote only. (Parkman, *A Half Century of Conflict*.) Also McLennan, *Louisbourg from its foundation to its fall, 1713-1758*, pp. 131, 132.



succours, expected from France in the early spring, from being thrown into the town.

In similar terms he addressed Warren at Antigua. He was personally acquainted with the Commodore, and shewed that he hoped Warren himself might command the expedition. "If the service in which you are engaged," he wrote, "would permit you to come yourself and take upon you the command of it, it would I doubt not be a most happy event for his Majesty's service and your own honour." To him also Shirley pointed out what the capture of Louisbourg meant. "I need not observe to you," he said, "that the consequences of succeeding in this expedition would be the preservation of Nova Scotia and gaining Canada as well as Cape Breton, which would secure his Majesty the whole northern continent, gaining the whole fishery exclusive of the French, increasing greatly the nursery of seamen for the Royal Navy, and securing the navigation of Great Britain to and from her northern colonies as far as Virginia; all which would be an equivalent for the expense of a French war, let the consequences of it in Europe be what they will<sup>1</sup>."

Ogle received Shirley's letter on the 14th March. His command was then at an end, and he passed it on to Davers with the laconic remark "I am of opinion that it is not in your power to comply with Mr Shirley's request."

As the preceding account of the Jamaica squadron in the early months of 1745 has shewn, its condition was indeed poor, and Davers may well be excused for being of the same opinion. It is less easy to acquit Ogle of not doing his utmost to second an operation of such great importance. He was about to sail for England with one small and four large ships<sup>2</sup>, and, although these vessels were not in a condition to remain permanently on the station, they had been refitted with all the stores in Jamaica for the homeward voyage, and were in a fit state to undertake a service which would not in any case occupy a long time, nor take them greatly out of their way on their voyage home. Ogle treated the whole proposal in a supercilious way. Some appreciation of the importance of Cape Breton, some initiative on his part, and the honours that fell to another Commander might have been his.

Commodore Peter Warren, the other Commander of whom Shirley

<sup>1</sup> This view of the importance of the fisheries as a recruiting ground for seamen runs through the whole of the old colonial policy of this country. Cf. Beer, *The Old Colonial System*, vol. I. p. 201, also Index, "Fisheries." Pitt's views on the matter greatly influenced his attitude towards peace in 1761. Cf. Basil Williams, *Life of William Pitt*, vol. II. pp. 91-100.

<sup>2</sup> 'Cumberland,' 80; 'Rippon,' 60; 'Montagu,' 60; 'Assistance,' 50; 'Experiment,' 20.

asked assistance, took a different view. He was a man 42 years of age and a captain of 18 years' standing. He was well acquainted with the coast of north America, on which station he had served at intervals during the last six years in the 20-gun frigate 'Squirrel.' His knowledge of that part of the world had caused Norris to bring him home during 1739 to advise Walpole on matters connected with the war with Spain<sup>1</sup>. His interests in America were considerable. He was a large landowner in New York, his wife was a Boston lady, and the well-known Colonel Johnston, afterwards Sir William Johnston, was his nephew. Both by his acquaintance with the coast and people of Massachusetts and by his personal interests, he was well qualified to direct an enterprise with which the fortunes of that colony were so intimately connected. But besides this he was, as all his correspondence shews, a man of a singularly attractive personality, with a gift of inspiring affection in those with whom he worked. A man who could deprive the hot tempered Knowles of his ship, and remain on good terms with him after a most stormy correspondence, must certainly have been possessed of no common qualities; nor would many energetic officers of his period, brought up in the traditions of the Royal Service, have worked in cordial cooperation with a colleague like the worthy though cautious merchant who was to command the land forces, Mr William Pepperell. Indeed, it speaks volumes for the good sense of both the naval officer and the merchant soldier that they carried through their operations without friction. At a later date in the war, Warren had joined to his command a Dutch force under Admiral Scrijver, whose testimony to the Commodore's personality is a striking one. On giving up command this officer wrote thus to the Admiralty: "I must not pass with silence the distinguished merits of Sir Peter Warren, notwithstanding his merits to the service of the kingdom are sufficiently known. So I shall only add thereto that it is a matter of great dispute what he excels in, if in the service to his country or in his friendly behaviour to those who have the honour to serve under him. Insomuch that his Serene Highness the Prince of Orange having done me the honour to promote me to be an Admiral, I have hitherto neglected to hoist the flag from the maintop in order not to be deprived of the opportunity of serving the two nations in an advantageous post and under an agreeable chief from whom I part with great concern<sup>2</sup>." This may be taken as all the greater compliment to Warren's behaviour in view of what seems to have been Scrijver's reputation. Lord

<sup>1</sup> *D.N.B.* "Warren."

<sup>2</sup> Admiral Scrijver to Secretary of Admiralty, July 21st 1748. Letters concerning Dutch auxiliary squadrons.

Sandwich especially cautioned Anson to act in a "friendly manner" towards him. "Give me leave to desire you," he wrote, "to caution the person whoever it is that commands our Western Squadron to act in a friendly manner with Scrijver. You may use my authority to say that he may be depended upon as a man that will do his duty. If he errs, it will not, I am convinced, be in backwardness, and he has certainly knowledge of his profession; but I believe his temper is not of the most complying sort, so be so good as to excuse his failings in consideration of his other qualities<sup>1</sup>."

For all his pleasant manner to his subordinates there was no lack of firmness in Warren's relations with them, as his behaviour will subsequently shew. He was also a man with a keen intuition for strategy and an eye for a tactical situation as his conduct at the battle of Finisterre was to demonstrate. Horace Walpole describes him as "richer than Anson and as absurd as Vernon," but it is not only in disparaging naval officers that Walpole's constitutional acidity got the better of his good sense, and no importance need be attached to his comment. Warren's performances in America and in the Channel, and the testimony of the men who served with him, form a better basis on which to estimate his merits.

Shirley's letter reached Warren at Antigua on February 22nd. A council of war of four captains was held at once. The conclusion to which they came was that it was impossible for the squadron to act in the matter. Their reasons were that not only had the enterprise been undertaken without Admiralty approval, but also that an enemy's squadron had been reputed at Martinique. Binding as these considerations were the matter was felt to be too important to be laid aside, and the 'Mercury' was at once despatched to England to request instructions.

Warren went further than his colleagues. He wrote privately to Anson<sup>2</sup> urging that the proposed expedition against Louisbourg should be undertaken. It is most striking that one of the reasons he gave for this opinion was that the possession of the place would free the North American colonies from the danger which threatened them, if the French, as he apprehended they might, should extend their American possessions, and join up their colonies from the St Lawrence to the Mississippi, and thus prevent any further development of the English colonies to the Westward. This was the actual policy of de la Galissonnière which was the determining cause of the outbreak of war with France eleven years later, and Warren's appreciation of the situation

<sup>1</sup> Sandwich to Anson, November 3rd, 1747. Add. MS. 15957, f. 22.

<sup>2</sup> Anson correspondence, B.M. Add. MS. 15955.

marks him as a man who did not confine himself merely to the practice of the details of his profession.

To keep Shirley in heart Warren at the same time wrote to him, and while informing him of the decision of the Council, added that he was immediately sending the two stationed ships, 'Launceston' and 'Mermaid,' to New England and New York<sup>1</sup>. He had received instructions, he said, to send these two vessels together with the 'Weymouth,' but as the last named had been wrecked these two were now the only ships available.

Meanwhile Shirley's suggestions in his letter to the Admiralty of December 7th had been acted upon. Received on January 15th, the possibilities were at once recognised, and a sloop—the 'Hind'—was sent out to Warren directing him to proceed to North America without delay with the 'Weymouth' 60, 'Mermaid' 40, 'Launceston' 40, and 'Hastings' 40, to cooperate with the colonial forces. The 'Hind' reached Antigua on March 8th and Warren communicated the order to his captains, telling them that he now proposed to sail at once, and that as the 'Weymouth' had been wrecked<sup>2</sup>, he intended to take the 'Superbe' in her place. "I think it for his Majesty's service," he said, "to proceed to North America without a moment's loss of time in the 'Superbe' as the loss of the 'Weymouth' may otherwise disappoint the service their Lordships may expect to be carried out<sup>3</sup>." He therefore directed Knowles, whose pendant flew aboard the 'Superbe' to transfer it to the 'Severne' and take command of the Leeward Island station with a captain under him<sup>4</sup>.

Knowles, backed by the whole of the captains of the squadron, strongly remonstrated with Warren, and signed a paper representing that it was highly undesirable to weaken the squadron at this moment, when a French force was expected at Martinique. But Warren was firm. Notwithstanding the decision of the Council of War, every member of which opposed his action, the strong expostulations of Knowles and of the Governor and Assembly of Antigua, the last named of whom complained in the strongest terms of the danger to which the islands and the trade would be exposed by his departure, he informed them that he intended to sail, and adhered to his intention to take the 'Superbe.'

<sup>1</sup> Warren to Shirley, February 24th, 1745. Quoted in Shirley's letter to Admiralty of March 27th.

<sup>2</sup> She arrived from England on February 10th and was lost on Sandy Island a week later.

<sup>3</sup> Captains' Letters.

<sup>4</sup> This latter was an important concession. A commodore without a captain under him was not entitled to flag share of prizes.



Knowles thereupon declined to take command of the station. If the 'Superbe' were taken away he would, he said, have no ship, and without his pendant flying where their Lordships had ordered, it would not be possible for him to exercise the command—a contention which had no basis in fact or practice, for Knowles himself had flown his pendant on board nearly every ship of the squadron from the 'Woolwich' 40, to the 'Lyme' 20. Warren, however, was not to be dissuaded by this refusal, and replied by giving Knowles a direct order, in the presence of two captains, to take the squadron under his orders until their Lordships' pleasure was known. The Admiralty, he said, could judge between them when the report of his action reached them. Knowles then obeyed Warren's order, left the 'Superbe,' and held a meeting of the remaining captains, who wrote him a joint letter giving it as their opinion that he should continue in the command "lest his Majesty's service should suffer," and inviting him to hoist his pendant on board any of their ships<sup>1</sup>. He acted on this advice and chose the 'Severne' as his flagship.

In acting as he did, Warren shewed an admirable freedom from fear of responsibility. He rose superior to the decision of the Council of War—a thing in itself most creditable as some doubt existed as to whether the Council's decision was binding—and while he listened to their representations and heard their reasons, he did not allow the remonstrances of the captains, the Governor or the Assembly of Antigua to influence him in putting into effect what he considered the spirit of the instructions. He had every excuse possible for remaining where he was. The Admiralty orders to take the ships to America were drawn up in the belief that a wholly different situation existed from what was really the case—that there was one more 60-gun ship on the station and that no French ships were expected. But the 'Weymouth' was wrecked, the rumours of an enemy force near Martinique were persistent, and the 'Hind' actually reported having seen a French squadron off the Canaries. Warren was prepared to take the risk that the French were not coming, or that if they were a British force equal to them would follow. Realising that in war risks must be taken, he was sure that this was one that was justifiable, as indeed it proved to be.

In estimating his decision, it must not be forgotten that the function of the squadron in the Leeward Islands was the protection of the islands and the trade, and that not only in those waters but also in the seas nearer home the highest importance was attached to the

<sup>1</sup> Letter of March 12th, signed by Francis Holburne, W. Lisle, Thos. Philpot, Thos. Summers, Thos. Innes, James Campbell. Captains' Letters, Knowles, 1745.

security of sea-borne commerce; that the voices of the merchants carried the greatest weight with the ministries of the day; that complaints from them of lack of protection might lead to the breaking of an officer<sup>1</sup>; and that, although to hold a council of war was not imperative (as the Mathews Court Martial decided later) an officer who acted in direct opposition to the unanimous vote of the remainder of the council exposed himself to the most serious penalties, if his subsequent action were unsuccessful.

Warren sailed from Antigua in the 'Superbe' on March 13th with the 'Launceston,' 'Ruby' and 'Mermaid' in company; he sent a despatch ahead to Boston, which reached Shirley on the 15th March, announcing that to save time he was on his way direct to Cape Breton, calling at Canso on his way for intelligence and water only; and he sent orders to the 'Eltham,' then at Piscataway, and to the 'Bien Aimé'—a prize—at Boston, to join him off Louisbourg.

Shirley on his part had not been idle. Over four thousand troops had been raised in the northern colonies, principally by Massachusetts, and placed under the command of Mr William Pepperell, a merchant of Kittery, with the rank of General; and a flotilla<sup>2</sup> of thirteen small craft had also been assembled under Captain Tyng of the Massachusetts Colonial Marine.

The army sailed from Nantasket Road on March 24th, embarked on board some 90 transports and escorted by the little flotilla under Tyng. They encountered a severe north-east gale which scattered them, but manned as they were by some of the finest seamen in the world, all the vessels arrived separately and in safety at Canso during the early days of April. Canso was quickly recaptured and a garrison was put into a fort of eight guns to hold it. As an immediate movement on Louisbourg was not possible, the approaches being still blocked by ice, the transports were obliged to remain at Canso, but the enforced delay was well employed in drilling the still raw levies. That no time should be lost the armed vessels at once proceeded to cruise as close to Louisbourg as possible, in order both to give the earliest information of the clearing of the ice and to intercept any supplies going to the fortress. It was well they did so, for on April 18th a French 36-gun frigate, the 'Rénommée,' arrived off the port bringing despatches for

<sup>1</sup> Commodore Fitzroy Lee two years later was sent home and court martialled in consequence of complaints from the merchants of Antigua that he had failed adequately to protect trade.

<sup>2</sup> 'Massachusetts,' 24; 'Caesar,' 20; 'Shirley,' 20; 'Prince of Orange,' 16; 'Boston,' packet, 16; five sloops of from 14 to 8 guns, a 20-gun ship hired by Rhode Island and two 16-gun sloops from Connecticut. Parkman, *A Half Century of Conflict*. J. F. Cooper gives 11 vessels, *History of the Navy of the U.S. of America*.

the Governor; but she was so roughly handled by the hardy privateersmen of Boston that she was unable to get into harbour, and returned to France with her mission unfulfilled.

On April 22nd the first of the British men-of-war—the 'Eltham'—arrived. Next day Warren with his three ships entered the harbour and after communicating with Pepperell sailed again at once to block up Louisbourg, the whole of the Colonial sea forces being put under his command. The ice cleared a few days later and the information that the navigation was open reached Pepperell on the 27th. Two days later the army sailed. Thus the very minimum of time had been lost and the promptitude with which the campaign was opened at the earliest possible moment gave the highest promise of success.

In the meantime the rumour which Warren had disbelieved had proved correct. Six French ships of the line<sup>1</sup> with two or three 36 and 30-gun frigates, two bomb vessels and two fireships, with 1500 marines on board, the whole being under the command of the Chevalier de Caylus, anchored at Martinique, having sailed from Cadiz on the 28th January<sup>2</sup>. Twenty-five large merchantmen with over 6000 men on board arrived between March 26th and April 1st, and it was reported that 1500 volunteers had been raised in Martinique, so that a French army of some 8000 men was now in the West Indies. The news that Caylus with some ships and transports was at Martinique reached Knowles at Antigua on March 23rd—ten days after Warren's departure. He at once sent off two sloops, to be convoyed by the 'Deal Castle' 20, as far as lat. 34°, one to the Admiralty and the other to Warren in the letter to whom he requested that the 'Superbe' and all the North American ships might be sent back at once to strengthen the force in the West Indian waters, adding that it was obvious that this squadron would proceed to attack the British colonies and reduce them one by one. The express reached Boston on April 16th, but Warren had not called there. He had however sent directions to Shirley to open any letters which came for him and deal with those of importance. Shirley sent the letter on to him in a storeship which did not sail until three days later—a delay in transmitting intelligence of such importance that exposes him to the suspicion that he was in no particular haste to let Warren know.

<sup>1</sup> 'Esperance,' 76; 'Northumberland,' 70; 'Trident,' 64; 'Serieux,' 64; 'Diamant,' 56; 'Aquilon,' 50. According to Beatson (vol. 1. p. 283) the French sent Caylus in consequence of intelligence that Davers was taking out a strong reinforcement to the British squadron. Cf. in connexion with this, *ante*, p. 110; also p. 216. n.

<sup>2</sup> All these had belonged to the Toulon division. It was reported to Knowles that Caylus had six of the line, one of them the 'Northumberland,' the others as shewn above. Caylus sailed subsequently in the 'Northumberland' with more ships.



The despatch eventually came into Warren's hands at Canso on April 23rd. He now had another momentous decision to make. On the one hand he had committed himself to an enterprise the troops composing which were already assembled within a day's sail of their objective. To desert them would mean the collapse of the expedition, and, what was not an unimportant matter, a bitter feeling would be generated in the northern colonies which had embarked their hopes, their men, their money in the enterprise. On the other hand the valuable West Indian Islands were now exposed to attack by a superior force, the squadron there might be crushed, and the blame would fall on him who had deserted them in spite of the representations of every officer, both naval and civil, on the spot. What, however, could he effect by returning? It would take him at least three weeks, probably more, to reach Antigua. A month had already passed since the arrival of the enemy, and in these seven or more weeks the enemy, if they had any territorial objective in view, would assuredly have made themselves masters of it. Besides this, the enemy's force was so strong that though Warren might reinforce the Leeward Island squadron with all the ships he had, he would not bring it up to an equal strength with that under Caylus; and he could have no hopes of engaging it on anything approaching equal terms, much less of recovering any of the possessions it might have captured, for he had no troops which could deal with such large numbers. He had also one further important reason for not returning. He could depend on the news that this formidable force was abroad having reached the Admiralty, and he might reasonably feel confident that a reinforcement would be sent from home sufficient to cope with it. This rule should always be one on which a commander on a foreign station must be able to count, that when an enemy's force greatly superior to his own arrives in the waters in which he commands, a similar force can be afforded to be detached from home waters to redress the balance. Another balance of a different nature also existed in this case. If the French did by their superior force in the Leeward Islands take some British possessions, the capture of Louisbourg would set the scales fairly even, and it was good strategy to concentrate on that object. However Warren may have argued the case out his decision was to remain and support the expedition.

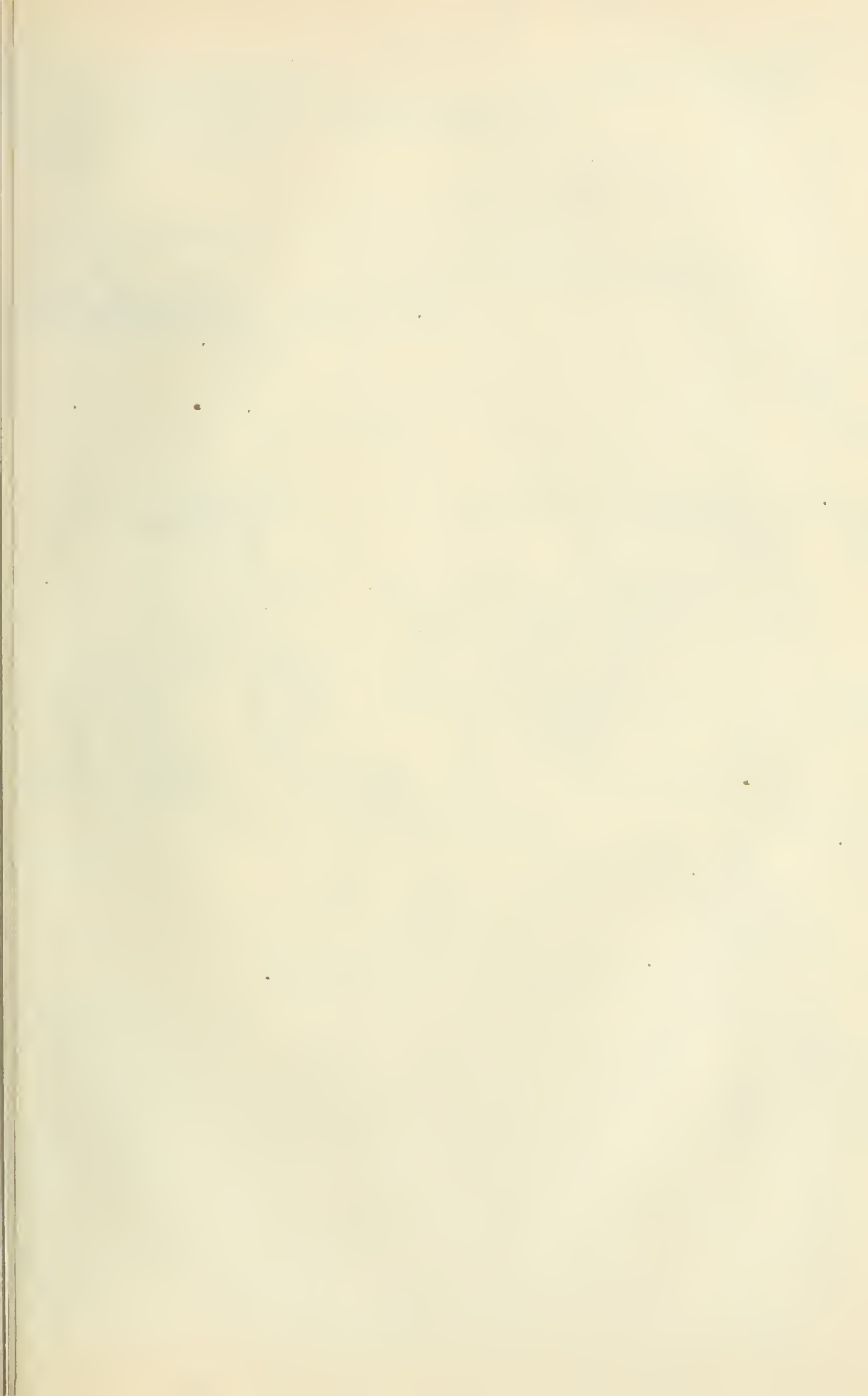
An elaborate scheme of operations had been drawn up by a Committee in Boston for the guidance of the commander of the expedition, in which every detail was set out with meticulous care—a perfect model of the type of instructions to be avoided. When the time came the scheme, as such detailed schemes will, fell to the ground. It had been intended to endeavour to surprise the fortress, with which object in

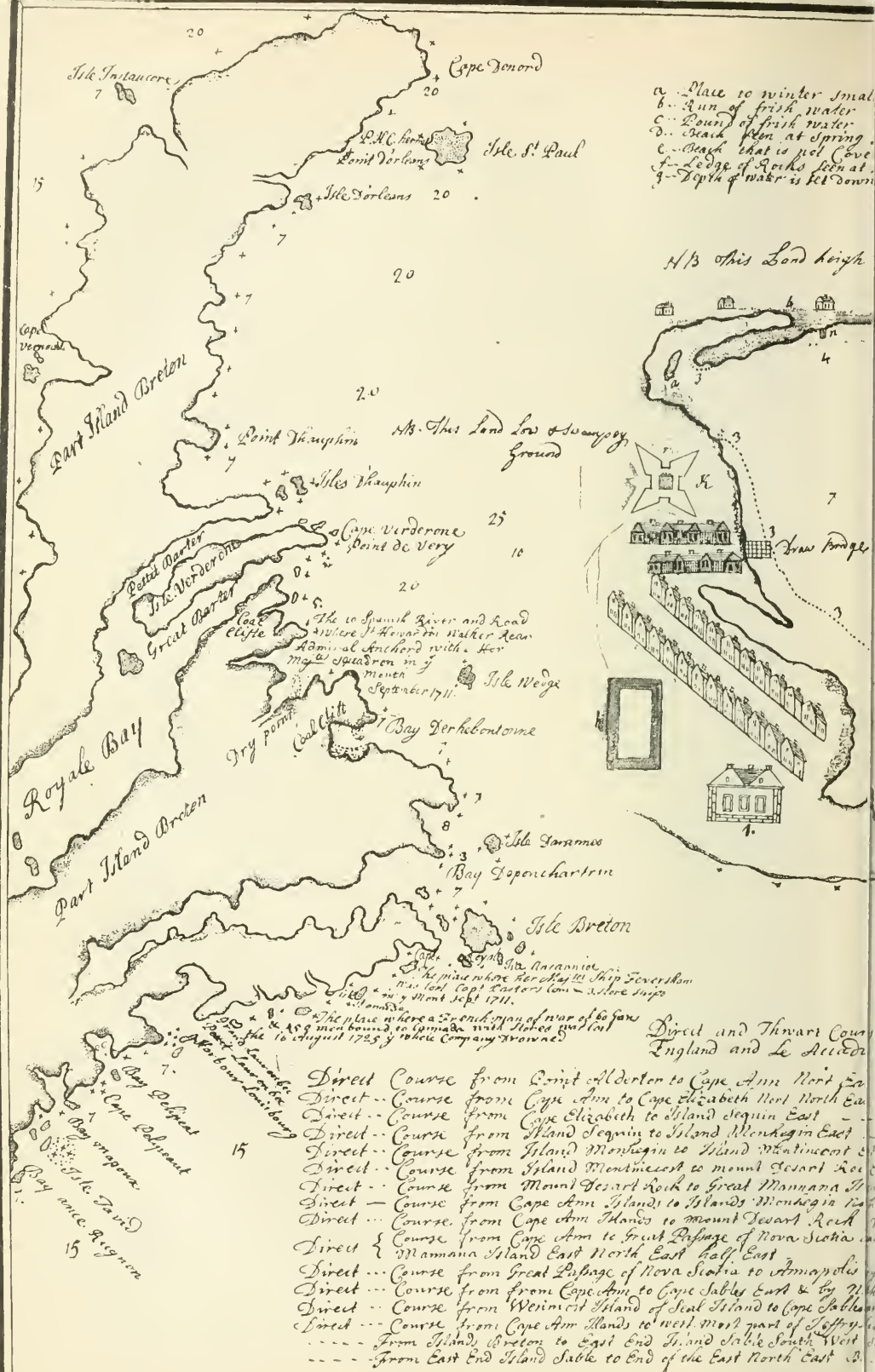


view the flotilla and transports were to arrive in Gabarus Bay a little to the westward of the port after dark on the 29th. The troops were then to be put into the boats, in each of which two 15 foot scaling ladders were provided. The boats were to row close in shore until they came to a small cove where the wall of the town began, and there land and scale the walls just before dawn when the garrison would be least prepared: or, if that point proved impracticable to assault, the men were to land near the East Gate. Owing, however, to various delays, the fleet did not reach the entrance to the port till 8 A.M. on the 30th and the chances of surprise were lost. The ships were brought to an anchor and a landing was begun at once in Freshwater Cove about  $2\frac{1}{2}$  miles to the westward of the walls of the fortress. The advance was opposed for a short time by about 100 men of the garrison who sallied from the town and opened a smart musketry fire on the landing parties. The covering vessels, however, which had moved in with the boats drove off the French with a heavy fire of grape shot, and 2000 men were put ashore on that day with little loss; the remainder landed on the following day. The French in the meanwhile burned the houses outside the town and cleared the ground so that no shelter might be afforded to the besiegers, and the ships in harbour were sunk to block the entrance.

Next morning an advance was made round the head of the harbour towards the Grand Battery, the garrison of which abandoned it before the troops arrived. It was occupied without loss, and such guns as the enemy had spiked were promptly drilled and turned on the town. Other batteries were raised on the west side of the town against the King's Bastion, though the arming of them was a formidable task. The guns had to be dragged over two miles of soft swampy country, but the ingenuity of a Colonel of the New Hampshire regiment, who was by profession a ship-builder, provided the means; he constructed wooden sledges 16 feet long on which the guns were placed, and hauled them into position with teams of 100 men. The stores and ammunition were got ashore, not without difficulty on the exposed beach, in flats brought pecially from Boston. By the 7th May the preparations for attack were in so advanced a state that Pepperell and Warren sent a summons to the Governor to surrender, which he very properly refused to consider.

Reinforcements to the squadron now began to arrive. Besides ordering Warren to Louisbourg, the Admiralty were sending ships from England. The 'Princess Mary,' 60, arrived on the 4th May in seven weeks from St Helens, whence she had sailed with the 'Hector,' 40, with instructions (dated February 19th) to proceed direct to

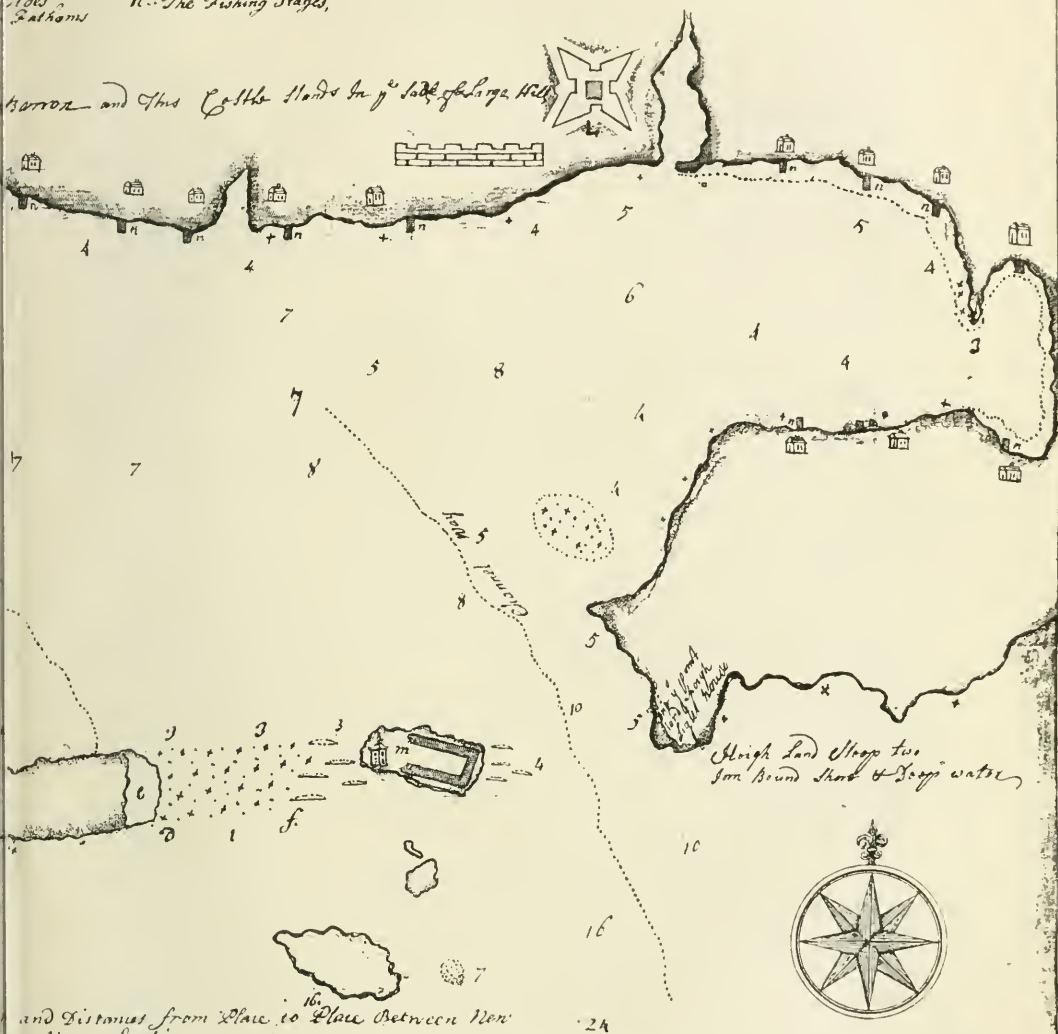




# Explanation

1. The Citadel 120 Paces long with Town of Louisbourg  
 2. The Hospital 90 Paces long  
 3. Castle which will mount 100 Guns 14 & 24 & 36 pounders  
 4. Fort which has 36 Guns mounted with 4 Platforms n° 6 Guns  
 5. On the Island Battery mounted with 30 Cannon  
 6. The Fishing Stages

A Scale of Louisbourg Harbour is 300 Fathoms

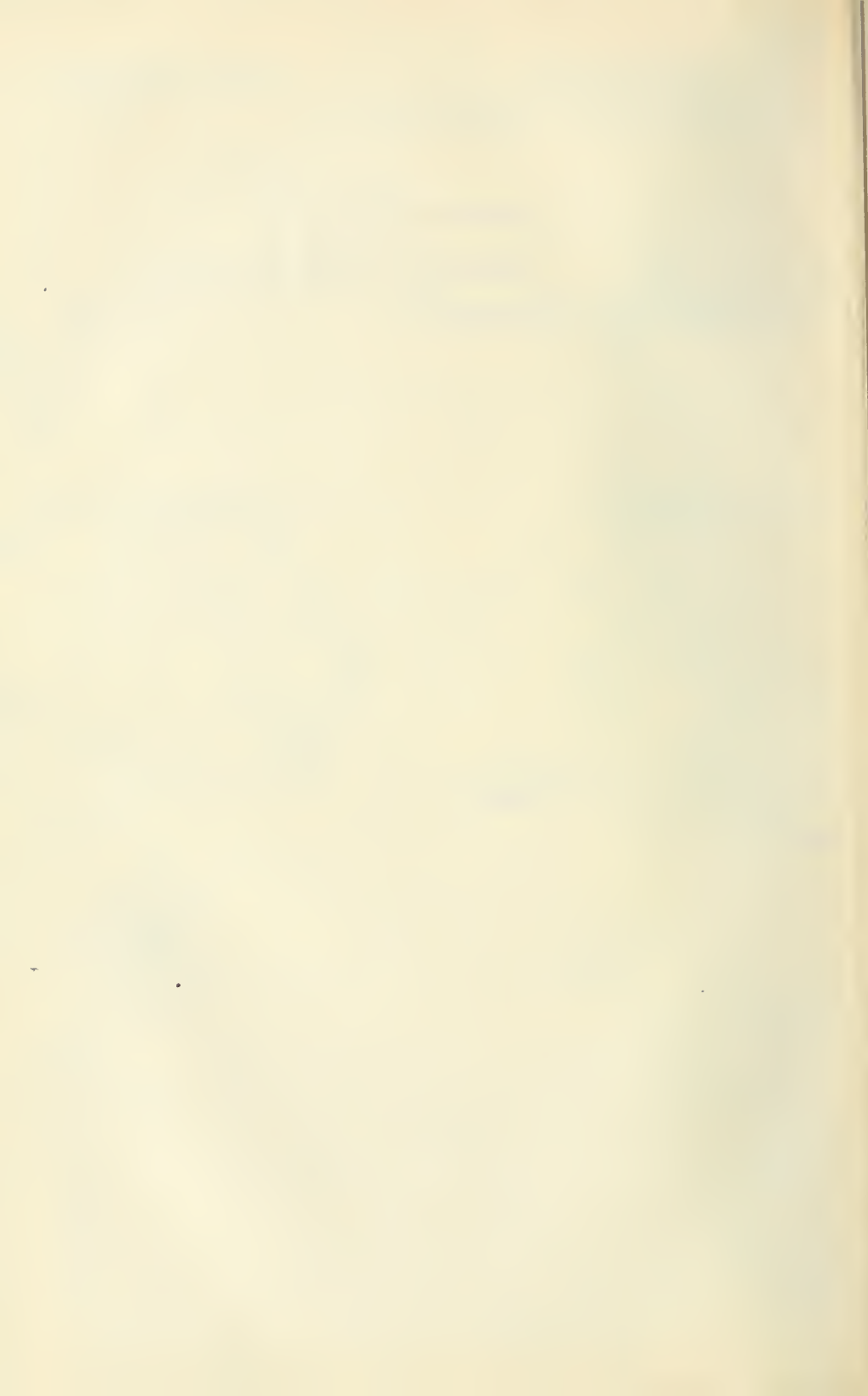


and Distance from Place to Place Between Nova Scotia

Leagues		Leagues
10	Direct Course from Cape Ann Islands to Westmost part of	27
28	Cathies Ledge and Rocks East half North	
10	Direct Course from Cape Ann Islands to Westmost part of Browns Band Et c.	62
10	Direct Course from Cape Ann Islands to Westmost part of	
10	Seal Islands Bank East Half North	74
14	Direct Course from Mount Desert Rock to entry of Annapolis Royall	
13	Clear of Great Mannana Islands East and by North	57
43	Direct Course from Cape Sables to Island Sables East & North	
60	Thwart Course from Mount Desert Harbour to Westmost	80
88	Seal Island of Cape Sables South East & by East	40
9	Thwart Course from Grand Menagen to 4 Westmost Seal Islands E & by S	55
87	Direct Course from Great Mannana to Seal Islands	67
7	Thwart Part of Grand Road South East & by South	28
5	From Cape Canso to Louisbourg on the Island Breton East N East	26
34	From Cape Canso to Islands Breton East North East	34

A B The Town is well built with strong & sandy soil, well built  
 built with Red Stone & strong Red Lime and 3 Town much bigger  
 than represented. I have seen 70 Soil of Sugar there all and some  
 Black Anest Ground & no Rocks within 4 Miles of it.





Louisbourg with all despatch. Both ships had, however, put into Boston, the former to repair some damages, the latter to place in safety a Spanish prize she had taken on the way out, whereby she did not arrive till the 19th May. In such circumstances as these no delays should have been incurred. Where time was of such high importance nothing could justify the slightest tarrying, as the making or the marring of the enterprise might have depended on the prompt arrival of these ships.

The blockade was established none too soon, and Shirley's foresight in making an early start before the enemy could be reinforced received further justification. In the first fortnight no fewer than ten prizes were taken, most of them laden with provisions, stores and reinforcements for the garrison; one alone had no less than 60,000 lbs of bread on board, a very sensible loss to the starving besieged. Only two small vessels, one of which was laden with wine and brandy, succeeded in evading the men-of-war and privateers and finding their way, thanks to a thick fog, through the cruising ships into the harbour.

After the rejection of the summons on the 7th May Warren went up to the camp to confer with Pepperell as to the further conduct of the siege. He spent four days with the General, and after the two commanders had considered the different methods open to them of reducing the town, they agreed on May 11th to restrict the operations to a blockade and endeavour to starve the garrison to surrender, accompanying the blockade by steady bombardment from the shore batteries. Sickness however soon began to set in and the number of men available became more reduced each day. Pepperell became anxious and wrote to Boston for a reinforcement of 1000 men, while Warren landed 300 men from the squadron—the most he could spare and at the same time keep his ships constantly cruising<sup>1</sup>.

A week later an important capture was made. The bulk of the squadron was cruising somewhat to the southward of the harbour on the morning of May 19th, with the 'Mermaid,' 40, Captain Jas. Douglas, some distance to windward, the wind being about E.N.E. At noon the 'Mermaid' sighted a large sail to the S.E. which at once chased her. The English ship stood under all sail towards the main body which was hidden in a bank of fog in shore. The stranger, hoisting French colours, came up fast and a running action with bow and stern guns followed until 2 P.M., when the chase suddenly sighted the British squadron emerging from the mist close to her. She at once

<sup>1</sup> Parkman (*A Half Century of Conflict*) says Warren landed only three or four gunners to instruct in the batteries; but in a letter to Shirley dated May 12th, Warren states that he has landed 300. In letters, Colonial Governors.

hauled to the S.W. under all possible sail; the 'Mermaid' promptly wore after her, and clinging to her starboard quarter kept up a lively fire upon her, yawing to give her broadsides as occasion offered. At 6 in the evening Captain Rous in a privateer snow joined in the pursuit and played his bow gun upon the Frenchman, and at 8 the 'Superbe' and 'Eltham' came up. The running action lasted another hour, after which the enemy struck, and proved to be a fine 64-gun ship, the 'Vigilant,' Captain de Maisonfort, carrying stores, guns and men for the garrison and provisioned for six months. Her capture was the turning point of the enterprise. Her getting in would, in Warren's opinion, unquestionably have meant the raising of the siege. The admirable behaviour of the 40-gun ship and the snow in clinging to their powerful antagonist furnishes an example for all time.

May came to an end and June began. The garrison still held out, and sickness continued to take its toll of the colonial troops. On the 28th May only 2100 men were fit out of an original 4000<sup>1</sup>. Impatient at the slowness of the operations Warren had proposed to Pepperell on May 24th that 1600 men should be embarked on board the squadron, which should then force the harbour's mouth and attack the town on the harbour side while the remainder of the forces attacked the town on the land face. Pepperell declined to make this attempt, and Warren wisely curbed his impatience; but the General, at the instance of some of his officers, sanctioned an attack on the Island Battery, the important work which commanded the mouth of the harbour. The attempt was made on the night of the 26th by 400 volunteers who embarked in boats from the Grand Battery at midnight. They attempted to seize the fort by a *coup de main* but were repulsed with a loss of 189 men—a repulse which greatly depressed the army<sup>2</sup>. This repulse and the recognition of the importance of the battery if the ships were in any way to aid actively in the attack, quickened the commanders' perceptions. Pepperell now observed that, separated as it was by only 1000 yards from the opposite shore of this entrance, it was vulnerable to artillery fire from Lighthouse Point. A mortar battery was therefore erected at that Point which shelled the fort on the Island very effectively.

In the meantime great anxiety was being felt in England as to the operations. Admiral Martin was watching the French ports, but owing to the wideness of his cruising ground and the smallness of his force his blockade was not effective; and in the first days of April the

<sup>1</sup> Pepperell to Warren, quoted by Parkman. Pepperell had lent Warren 600 men to man the 'Vigilant.'

<sup>2</sup> "Disorder, precipitation and weak leadership ruined what hopes the attempt ever had." Parkman.

Admiralty received an express from him<sup>1</sup> to the effect that a squadron of six ships under des Herbiers de l'Etandière had escaped him, and, though chased, had got clear away and was believed to be going to Cape Breton. A reinforcement was at once despatched from England consisting of the 'Sunderland,' 60, 'Canterbury,' 60, 'Chester,' 50, and 'Lark,' 44, which when joined to the ships already with Warren<sup>2</sup> would ensure him a superiority over de l'Etandière. These ships sailed at once and arrived, the 'Chester' on the 10th June, the three others on the 13th. They had been ordered to sail without taking any trade with them and to repair to Canso which it was correctly anticipated would be the base of the operations.

The day after this reinforcement arrived Warren called a Council of War. Things ashore were beginning to look black. No apparent progress had been made in the siege, the season was advancing and the sickness increasing. The reinforcement asked for by Pepperell was being raised, but it was not expected to arrive for some time, and the fogs now coming on were making a sea blockade almost impossible. Besides this, news had just come that relief by land was coming to Louisbourg. While the British forces were besieging Cape Breton, a combined French, Canadian and Indian force under M. de Ramesay was similarly investing Annapolis. Both garrisons were in sore straits, and while that of Annapolis called on Warren to send some ships to open communication with Boston and raise the blockade, the defenders of Louisbourg were similarly calling on de Ramesay to send troops to relieve them by land. Warren sent two 20-gun ships and a 16-gun snow to raise the blockade; de Ramesay however had already marched from Annapolis to the relief of Louisbourg before the ships arrived. His force was now on its way, and the necessity for despatch in the operations at Cape Breton was obvious. The island battery had been rendered almost untenable by the mortars on Lighthouse Point, and Warren therefore put it to his captains whether they ought not now to embark on stronger measures and take the ships in to batter the town. The Council evidently took their cue, as councils will, from their leader, and recorded their opinion that they "having duly considered the dishonour it may bring upon His Majesty's arms not to attempt to attack with the squadron now here, are unanimously of opinion that we should go into the harbour and use our utmost endeavours to reduce it to obedience."

This decision made, Warren at once communicated it to Pepperell. A general attack by land and sea was agreed upon, the details of which

<sup>1</sup> See Chapter VII, p. 151.

<sup>2</sup> 'Superbe,' 60; 'Princess Mary,' 60; 'Hector,' 40; 'Mermaid,' 40; 'Launceston,' 40; 'Eltham,' 40. He had also the 'Vigilant,' 64, but this the Admiralty did not yet know.



were drawn up next day. The ships cleared for action and prepared to move in the following morning; but all preparations were rendered unnecessary by the arrival of a flag of truce from the Governor with request for a suspension of arms to consider articles of capitulation. A suspension till 8 A.M. on the 17th was accorded. Terms were then arranged, the island battery was occupied by a detachment of marines, and in the presence of the starving and dispirited garrison the Governor surrendered the town and arsenal to the naval and military commanders. The victorious colonial troops then marched proudly into the fortress, the possession of which not only protected their own homes but placed in their hands the key of the St Lawrence which could open the way into Canada itself<sup>1</sup>.

*NOTE.* Since this book was in the Press, an examination of the *Archives de la Marine* and *Archives des Colonies* has furnished me with some light upon Caylus's squadron. Caylus, who was cruising off Toulon under instructions of August 17th, was appointed Governor-General of the French Leeward Islands in October 1744. His squadron, which so disturbed Knowles, Warren and the other civil and naval authorities in the West Indies (see Chap. X), had no offensive mission, nor was it related to Davers and his reinforcement (p. 210, n.), but was simply an escort for himself and a convoy of merchant vessels bringing out provisions badly needed by the distressed islands. "L'arrivée de M. le Marquis de Caylus au fort Royale le 8 de ce mois a causé une joie universelle. M. de la Touche l'a précédé de plusieurs jours escortant plusieurs vaisseaux marchands venus fort à propos prévenir le manque de vivres..." (de Poinssable to Maurepas, April 20th, 1745).

Caylus was urged to occupy and defend St Lucia, but though the high importance of the islands was pointed out he would not do so; and when he learned of Warren's departure for Cape Breton, so far was he from thinking of a counter attack on the British Islands, that he contemplated taking his squadron to Louisbourg to aid the defence.

This furnishes a further example of the influence of reading offensive intentions into every movement of an enemy.

<sup>1</sup> Shirley also looked on our possession of Louisbourg not only as a protection to the northern colonies and a means of attacking Canada, but also as giving Great Britain a hold on the colonies themselves "if ever there should come a time when they should grow restive and disposed to shake off their dependency upon their Mother country, the possibility of which, for my own part, I most freely own, seems to me from the observations I have been able to make upon the spot, at the distance of some centuries further off than I have heard it does to some gentlemen at home" (Shirley to the Secretary of the Admiralty, July 10th, 1745. In letters from Colonial Governors).

## CHAPTER X

### OPERATIONS IN NORTH AMERICA AND THE WEST INDIES (*continued*)

As soon as the arrangements for garrisoning Louisbourg had been completed, Warren proceeded to disperse the ships that had taken part in operations. His instructions of April 4th had provided for this. In them he was directed to send home the 'Sunderland,' 'Chester' and 'Canterbury' with the North American trade, and to detach the 'Princess Mary,' 'Hector' and 'Lark' to protect the Newfoundland fishery. The prisoners taken at Louisbourg he sent to Rochefort in the 'Launceston,' the 'Eltham' was appointed to escort the store-ships back to Boston; there would then have remained as the nucleus of a squadron at Louisbourg the 'Superbe,' 'Vigilant' and 'Mermaid,' with two ships of the line in Newfoundland within call which could join him in an emergency. As, however, there was no North American trade ready to go, Warren retained the three ships detailed for its convoy.

Warren's conduct of the affair met with the highest commendation at home when the full news of the capture reached England. "Commodore Warren has behaved in the whole affair so much like an officer who has nothing so much at heart as his Majesty's service as well as that of all the officers who had the pleasure to serve under him, and has kept up so good an agreement, by his prudent conduct, with the officers that command the land forces that I should think myself highly deficient in my duty was I not to represent how much I thought it was for his Majesty's service to reward so much merit in a conspicuous manner<sup>1</sup>." He was promoted to Rear-Admiral of the Blue, with seniority 10th August, 1745, and appointed Governor of Louisbourg. Warren summed the matter up in fewer, but equally accurate terms. In thanking the Admiralty for the ships they had sent him he described

<sup>1</sup> Duke of Bedford to Lord Harrington. July 26th, 1745. Bedford Papers.

It is to be noted that Warren and John Byng were promoted to Admiral at the same time, over the heads of three senior captains. In proposing to make the promotion the Duke of Bedford wrote "there are but three officers that are their seniors that will be put by by this promotion, viz. Captain Dansary of the 'Fubbs' yacht (and consequently out of the King's Military Service), Captain Cotterell and Captain Long, neither of which gentlemen we, of the Board of Admiralty, can recommend to his Majesty as proper persons to be appointed flag officers" Bedford Papers.

the capture as "one that could not have been acquired by the sea force without the land one, nor by the land one without the sea<sup>1</sup>."

In this case the preparations were well thought out, and the equipment of the expedition expeditiously and thoroughly made. The only blot on the colonial arrangements was one which was very hard to guard against—secrecy was not preserved. Shirley, when he communicated the proposal to the Assembly enjoined the strictest care in this respect, but as there is always someone who must exhibit his importance by confiding secrets to others, so the destination leaked out and was soon known all over the province<sup>2</sup>; and the news reached even to Canada and Louisbourg. The effects of this leakage were, however, less important than they might have been, for in Canada the rumour was frankly disbelieved, the scheme seeming impossible, and in Louisbourg, even if it were believed, no steps were taken to guard against the attack.

The prompt action of the Admiralty in sending Warren from the Leeward Islands and in despatching the reinforcements on each occasion<sup>3</sup> from England is noticeable; and it is also to be observed that the second reinforcement was actually unnecessary, as des Herbiers had gone to Cape Nicolas and not Cape Breton. It was however impossible to be strong everywhere, and if the enemy escaped the home squadrons, there was nothing for it but to try and guess to which of many places they might be gone. The importance of an efficient covering force at home in such operations is herein emphasised. The stronger the home squadrons, the better the watch that can be maintained and the less the chances that the enemy will so escape.

Finally, it was fortunate that the two commanders worked in such harmony. Pepperell's position was not an easy one. Discipline was practically non-existent in his volunteer army and he had to handle his officers and men with tact. Such an army was ill suited to siege operations. The spirit and training required for determined assaults, the right means of taking such a fortress in a limited time are not natural growths; hence the operations had to be conducted in the hopes of starving the garrison. The troops, who had expected an easy conquest, found themselves baffled, and it must have needed no small exercise of skilful authority to keep them together. Pepperell's appreciation of the importance of the sea blockade is shewn in the fact that even when his force was reduced by 50 per cent. he acceded to Warren's request to lend 600 men to man the 'Vigilant,' a decision

<sup>1</sup> Captains' Letters.

<sup>2</sup> Parkman, *A Half Century of Conflict*.

<sup>3</sup> I.e. February 19th and April 4th.

which does honour to his judgment. Warren's appreciation of Pepperell's difficulties is not less creditable. It was moreover well that there was on the spot at Antigua an officer of Warren's character who was prepared to take risks freely and immediately. If he had delayed in executing the first instructions of the Admiralty directly he received them the blockade would not have been established, the storeships and, more important still, the 'Vigilant,' would have got into harbour, and the expedition would have been cut off and forced to surrender. The effect of such a disaster on the relations between England and her North American colonies may well be imagined.

Warren now remained as Governor at Louisbourg, putting the fortress into a state of defence against the attempt the French would certainly make to recover it the following spring; a successor to him, and a reinforcement to the squadron, weakened as it would be when he should have carried out the orders to detach ships to Cape Breton, had already been arranged for by the Admiralty. The Leeward Islands and Barbados stations had been denuded of all ships of the line and now contained only four heavy frigates<sup>1</sup> and some small craft. Captain Henry Fitzroy Lee was appointed Commodore and Commander-in-Chief at Barbados and in the Leeward Islands, with a broad pendant on board the 'Suffolk,' 70. He brought out with him a reinforcement of two ships of the line. His instructions, which were dated February 20th, 1745, directed him to employ the ships of the squadron for the security of the trade and of the various islands, and to annoy the enemy.

Lee, bringing out as usual a convoy, was detained some time by foul winds in the Channel, which he did not clear until April 6th. He arrived at Barbados on May 13th, and in the meanwhile Knowles with his little squadron had the security of the islands in his care.

As we have seen, the news that Caylus had arrived at Martinique with his powerful squadron reached Knowles on March 23rd. Having sent his despatch to Warren requesting him to bring back the 'Superbe' and the North American ships, Knowles called in all the squadron and redistributed it for the protection of the islands and their local trade. He sent the 'Argyle' and 'Lyme' back to Barbados for cruising services; but he concentrated his principal attention upon the security of Antigua, his headquarters. A boom was thrown across the mouth of the English Harbour, covered by two ships<sup>2</sup>, and more batteries were

<sup>1</sup> There were in the Leeward Islands the 'Lynn,' 44; 'Deal Castle,' 20; 'Lyme,' 24; 'Otter,' 14; 'Fame,' 12; 'Comet,' 8; 'Hind,' 8; and at Barbados the 'Severne,' 50; 'Woolwich,' 50; 'Argyle,' 44. Knowles wore his broad pendant on board the 'Severne.'

<sup>2</sup> 'Woolwich' and 'Severne' moored broadside on.



raised on the two sides of the entrance in which 41 of the wrecked 'Weymouth's' guns were mounted. "I have the ambition to think the place impregnable by any sea force," wrote Knowles; an opinion which clearly expresses the limitation of such defences. At Falmouth Harbour, in order to prevent a landing being made, he moved the 'Lynn' and 'Rippon'<sup>1</sup> across the entrance; he stationed the 'Hind' to leeward of the island for the protection of local trade and sent the 'Fame' away south of Guadeloupe to act as a scout and look out for and give him early information of the enemy's movements. Entrenchments were thrown up in all important parts, and Antigua was thus made fairly secure by the transformation of the naval force, now too weak to cruise against the enemy's squadron, into a form of local fixed defence. The need for proper defences in a port of such local importance was through this brought to the notice of the Admiralty, who, when they received Knowles's letter, pointed out to the Ministry that as Antigua was the only place fit for careening and refitting to windward of Jamaica, it was necessary it should be put in a proper state of defence. They recommended that thirty 24-pounders should be sent out to replace the lighter guns which Knowles had mounted—these were mostly nine-pounders—together with a proper supply of ordnance stores and ammunition, and a detachment of troops to act as a permanent garrison to the island<sup>2</sup>.

But while Antigua was thus rendered as secure as the resources of the squadron would admit, Barbados was exposed. The Governor of that island wrote urgently requesting Knowles to send him some more ships as the 'Argyle' and 'Lyme' were in his opinion an insufficient protection. Knowles agreed that they were so, but had to point out that he could not send any force that would be of service against the superior French squadron; but he ordered the 'Lynn' to Barbados, assuring the Governor he could spare no more ships, and further that in view of the superiority of the French squadron he would himself be obliged to avoid meeting it.

By that psychological process which invariably takes place in such cases, the authorities at every place within striking distance of Martinique believed their own territory to be the immediate objective of Caylus's squadron. While Knowles thought that Antigua, as the headquarters of the naval force, was the most probable point of attack, the Governor of Barbados was equally convinced that his rich and well placed island would first attract the enemy. At Cape Breton it

<sup>1</sup> The 'Rippon' had arrived from Jamaica, convoying some mast ships to Boston. Knowles kept her and added her to his force. *Journal of Captain Knowles.*

<sup>2</sup> Memorials and Reports, August 14th, 1745.





was expected that des Herbiers de l'Etanduère and Caylus must certainly have been sent to protect or recover Louisbourg; Boston anticipated that the French squadrons would attack the northern colonies; and finally Davers at Jamaica looked upon it as natural that the capture of the greatest and richest of the British islands in the West Indies would certainly be the object of sending so strong a force into the Caribbean Sea.

Whether the enemy were designing to attack Jamaica or not, Davers had no easy task to perform. The weakness of his squadron had put him in great difficulties as to how to pursue the several ends for which it was stationed, and the appearance of Caylus did not lessen them. "We had repeated accounts," he says in a letter of August 5th, 1745, "of a French squadron (part of that which came out under M. Caylus) of two of 74, three of 64, and a 36 gun ship cruising off Cuba, and it was generally reported they expected a squadron from the Havana. It does not now appear that the French had any other intention than to protect their own trade and perhaps to alarm us, but it was with the utmost regret that I found my force unequal to an attempt of a service so important as the destruction of that squadron might have proved." A solution of the question might have been found in a return to the organisation of a common West Indian command; but the objections lay in the difficulty of joining the squadrons to windward. In consequence of the proved necessity for the British of having a squadron in each area, to windward and to leeward, the French, using a lesser force than the combined British would have formed, were able not only successfully to protect their own trade but also to keep the British commanders in a continual suspense. It is difficult to understand why no use was made by our enemies of their power to crush the weaker British forces in detail, but the direct method of protecting trade by escort was the approved practice of both the French and the Spanish service, and was the normal outcome of the general defensive policy which dominated the naval strategy of Paris and Madrid. Neither in the Mediterranean after February, 1744, in the Atlantic or in the West Indies did they combine their forces, but preferred an individualist instead of a common policy. How greatly they would have benefited by coordinating the action of their navies is evident. The appearance of even their small squadrons threw the British Caribbean islands into a wholesome flutter; what much more serious effects would have been produced by forces twice or three times as large, as these forces could have been. As it was, concentration was forced upon the local British squadrons, and with concentration of force in a widely extended area, protection of trade necessarily suffered.



The British Commanders were, as we have seen, in other parts, insufficiently provided with the light craft, essential to the defence of trade in every war, and had in consequence been obliged to scatter their ships of force to do the work properly belonging to lesser craft. When these were drawn in to meet the threat of the enemy's squadrons nothing was left to deal with the privateers.

The problem which Davers had to solve was, to put it briefly, how, with four ships of the line, three heavy frigates and seven small vessels of from 20 to 8 guns, he should protect the trade and territories comprised within the Jamaica command, attack the commerce of France and Spain, and at any moment be ready to deal with an irruption of such a squadron as might evade the squadrons in the Bay, as well as those squadrons more or less permanently maintained abroad. France had a squadron of six ships of the line and a heavy frigate; Spain had usually about eleven of the line<sup>1</sup>; and each power had privateers in apparently inexhaustible numbers. The more the merchant marine was blocked in port, the more readily were crews found to man privateers.

We now know that the orders to the French Commanders limited their action to protection of trade; but Davers, though he deduced this later, could not be expected to discover it at once. He could only know that certain squadrons had been sighted at some date previous to that on which he received the information. What their intentions were he could only conjecture. It is easy to say he should have got all his squadron together and sought them out, but throughout this time he was in inferior strength to the allies and his impression was that their object would be to unite their naval forces and, by crushing him, obtain an effective command in those waters. But Davers cannot be called wrong for expecting them to adopt the obvious method of protecting their trade; he therefore scattered his scanty force of small ships to deal with the privateers to the best of their ability and employed his heavy ones as convoy to the trade through the danger area. This occupied the whole force at his disposal, and he was unable to undertake offensive operations against the enemy's squadrons, or, in any organised manner, against their trade.

When Lee arrived, however, the conditions were changed. As related above he reached the Leeward Islands in May, 1745, and relieved Knowles, Caylus at about the same time being relieved by Conflans in command of the French squadron. Conflans began by attempting to capture the small island of Anguilla whither he sent a

<sup>1</sup> These figures constantly varied. The number of Spanish ships rarely dropped below eight, or double Davers's force.

force of two frigates of 36 and 30 guns, and three privateers, under Commodore Fouché, on May 21st. The men from these ships landed, but the local militia<sup>1</sup> who had turned out and established themselves in a strong position routed the attacking party, who only regained their ships with a loss of 35 killed and 65 wounded. Lee, when the news of the attempt reached him, detached the 'Dreadnought,' 'Deal Castle' and 'Lyme' after Fouché, but the French had left before the British ships arrived; an enemy is always able to escape in small raids of this nature, the defence against which must be a local force.

The bulk of Lee's squadron<sup>2</sup> now assembled at English Harbour with the object of falling upon the French homeward bound Martinique convoy. On June 5th the look-out station at Antigua sighted the French sugar fleet to leeward of the island. The information was at once carried to Lee that this valuable prize was in sight, escorted, so the report went, by a 74, three 64's, a 54 and a 48. Lee called a council of war, which agreed that the enemy were too strong to be attacked. But no attempt was made either to verify the report, or to try to do any good service by cutting off some of the convoy; and, as a result of this inaction, the French trade sailed undisturbed. Conflans reached Europe in safety in July, just as the British squadron which was being despatched to reinforce the West Indies in consequence of his presence was about to sail from European waters.

The trade had now sailed, and the hurricane season was close at hand, so that there was no longer any object in remaining in the Leeward Islands. Lee therefore, in accordance with custom, laid up such ships as needed repair at Antigua, and sent the remainder to cruise off the Spanish main, with orders to rejoin him at his headquarters in September.

The news of the arrival of the French squadrons in the West Indies had reached England in May, 1745. It was then evident that the ships which had been sent to Cape Breton in consequence of the sailing of de l'Etanduère had gone to the wrong destination; but nothing was done immediately to redress the balance in the Leeward Islands, in spite of the representations of the Admiral. The planters and traders however were able to bring about what the naval commanders could not. They sent a petition to the Duke of Newcastle for more protection;

<sup>1</sup> The local militia was formed of the white servants of the planters. Each planter was obliged by law to maintain one white servant for every 30 slaves and was liable to a penalty of £13 per head for deficiency in numbers. These were armed and formed the local defensive force against slave outbreaks, piratical attacks or raids by the enemy.

<sup>2</sup> 'Suffolk,' 70; 'Dreadnought,' 60; 'Argyle,' 50; 'Severne,' 50; 'Woolwich,' 50; 'Lynn,' 44; 'Lyme,' 24; 'Hind,' 20.

the Duke passed it on to the Admiralty on June 6th<sup>1</sup>, directing them to report what ships could be soonest got ready and spared to send to the West Indies. The Admiralty replied on the 10th June that so soon as they heard of the sailing of Caylus they had sent two ships out with Lee and that two others were to go as soon as they could be spared. No more ships could safely be afforded from home waters and their Lordships suggested, as the only expedient, to send a clean sloop at once to Rowley or Osborn with orders to provide a detachment from the Mediterranean squadron to join the two ships that were to be sent; and this course their Lordships had taken. The sloop had been despatched on the 8th.

The two other ships in question were the 'Lenox' and 'Pembroke.' Admiral Isaac Townsend received instructions on June 7th—it is noticeable that the date is the day after the Duke's letter of the 6th enclosing the planters' petition—to hoist his flag on board one of them, get them both ready for sea and be prepared to sail at a moment's notice. Further instructions followed next day, ordering him to sail with the Mediterranean trade as soon as possible, and on arrival at Gibraltar, to proceed thence to the West Indies with a squadron of eight ships, the other six being provided from Rowley's command. An express was sent to Rowley to get six ships victualled and in complete readiness to sail with Townsend directly he arrived. The urgency of the service was impressed upon him; the Government, he was told, were in great fear for Jamaica and the Leeward Islands in consequence of the arrival there of the Brest and Toulon squadrons. "His Majesty's service in the Mediterranean," wrote the Duke of Newcastle, "cannot by any means be thought to be compared with the protecting and defending such valuable possessions to this country"—an expression of opinion illustrating how large a place the colonial question occupied in an outlook upon the war in general. Further most secret instructions to Townsend directed him to endeavour to capture Porto Rico or St Lucia if he could obtain the cooperation of the Governors in the Leeward Islands.

A despatch<sup>2</sup> was at the same time sent to Davers at Jamaica informing him that Townsend was being sent out, and the reason, and directing him to send as many of his ships as he could spare from the Jamaica station to Barbados to be under Townsend's orders. Couched in these terms such an order was bound to be inoperative. Davers could spare none. He had the security of his own area to look out for; and at that very moment was complaining of the inadequacy of the

<sup>1</sup> In letters. Secretary of State series.

<sup>2</sup> Duke of Newcastle to Davers, June 10th, 1746.

squadron to perform its functions. If the Administration desired to concentrate the squadrons that they might be superior to the French, they should have given a definite order to that effect and should not have thrown on Davers the responsibility of deciding whether or no he could spare some of the ships from his command<sup>1</sup>.

Townsend was finally ordered so soon as he had arranged for the defence of the Leeward Islands to leave a sufficient force there under Lee and himself go to Jamaica and place himself under Davers's orders.

Although the Government professed, and undoubtedly felt, such anxieties for the West Indies, no endeavour was made by the Admiralty to hasten Townsend's departure. Although his own two ships were ready in June, he had to remain at Plymouth until July 19th collecting the Mediterranean trade. Then he sailed. Next day the 'Mermaid' arrived at Spithead with the news of the capture of Louisbourg.

This welcome and important intelligence brought about a new set of instructions for Townsend. Reinforcements were needed for the garrison of the new possession as soon as possible, and therefore two regiments of the Gibraltar garrison were to be embarked in transports so soon as these could be procured, and Townsend was to carry them direct to Louisbourg, turn them over to Warren, and himself return to the West Indies. These orders, however, failed to reach Townsend, and he proceeded in execution of his previous instructions<sup>2</sup>.

Townsend met some of Rowley's squadron off St Mary's and turned the trade over to them. Rowley was lying at Villa Nova, and there Townsend found him on August 1. The extra ships were ready, and delaying one night only at Villa Nova he sailed next day with his squadron<sup>3</sup> for Barbados where he arrived on the 30th August. Here he heard that the squadron which had threatened the islands had already returned to Europe; he therefore directed his attention to that portion of his orders which concerned offensive operations against the French or Spanish islands.

<sup>1</sup> In 1803 General Villetes was told to give Nelson 2000 men from the Malta garrison if he could spare them, for service in Sicily. Nelson's opinion of this order was thus expressed to Addington: "My dear Sir, these sort of orders should never be discretionary. You make an officer responsible for the safety of a place and tell him in the same breath to send away so many men if he can safely do so. An officer cannot but secure himself from such great responsibility" ('Amphion,' June 28th, 1803. *Nelson's Despatches*, v. p. 208). Wellington expressed a similar opinion in a corresponding case.

<sup>2</sup> In case Townsend should be missed, orders were sent to Gibraltar, ordering the Commander-in-Chief to escort the transports with two 40-gun ships.

<sup>3</sup> 'Dorsetshire' (flag), 'Princessa,' 'Lenox,' 'Pembroke,' 'Ipswich,' 'Kingston,' 'Hampshire,' 'Worcester.' The transports eventually sailed on November 7th, with 'Torrington,' 'Rupert,' 'Jersey,' 'Dartmouth' and 'Spence' sloop, and reached Hampton Roads in January, 1746.



St Lucia was an island on which the eyes of the British Commanders had long been set on account of the advantages which both from its character and position it presented as a naval base. The proposal to attack it on this occasion was the outcome of a suggestion from Commodore Knowles, who had written on October 15th, 1744, recommending its capture, "The number of secure bays and fine harbours in it," he wrote, "makes it invaluable, and its near neighbourhood to Martinique will always keep that island in subjection; and I apprehend, if the war continues any time and we keep masters of the seas in these parts<sup>1</sup>, it would be no difficult matter to reduce Martinique to obedience as by keen cruising they would be so soon distressed that they must come to terms or starve." He followed up these considerations with an expression of his opinion that if he could get enough volunteers from Barbados he could capture St Lucia.

On considering this letter, the Admiralty directed Knowles to endeavour to get the necessary volunteers and privateers, saying that the Duke of Montagu (to whom the island had been granted by George I, and who claimed its possession, although it was entirely unsettled) would give lands to anyone who took part in the capture and desired to settle there. In very similar terms to those used by Knowles, Lee also wrote (July 9th, 1745) pointing out the advantages the possession of the Island would confer upon us. The strategic importance of St Lucia was in fact fully appreciated by the seamen of the day; it was not however until later that their advice was acted upon in a thorough manner, when Pitt in 1759 sent orders to attack and take it.

The instructions which had been given at the earlier date to Knowles were repeated to Townsend, who brought out with him a letter from the Admiralty to the Governor of St Kitts expressing the hope that his Excellency would cooperate in the attempt to capture either St Lucia or Porto Rico. Thus, though the idea was approved, it was left to the discretion of the Governor to undertake the operation if he could raise troops locally for the purpose.

The effect of leaving the decision in the hands of the local authorities on this occasion, was that nothing was done. The Governor of St Kitts said that he had a garrison of only 400 men, and though he would be prepared to lend a small number he did not like denuding the island of its defence while the expedition was in progress. He made the alternative proposal that the squadron should endeavour to destroy

<sup>1</sup> Knowles appreciates in these words that "command of the sea" is a relative term, and does not fall into a common modern error of speaking of an universal command.

all French craft in those waters, "sweeping the roads" of Martinique and Guadeloupe; and then, having by this means made the British trade secure, blockade Port Royal and St Pierre's, bombard St Pierre's Fort where the provisions were stored, and by these means reduce Martinique to submission by starvation. This pretty scheme was unfortunately not practicable. The British sea commanders realised no less clearly than the Governor of St Kitts that the solution of the defence trade was to be found in destroying all the French craft in the West Indies, and this they had been trying to do for many months. But the "sweeping" of craft out of defended roadsteads, easy as it was on paper, presented some difficulties in practice as our seamen well knew from experience. The starvation of the island by blockade would entail removing the squadron from all other duties, and leaving the whole of the rest of the area free for the privateers to work in—unless the sweeping scheme had included every French inlet in the Caribbean. Also, although distress, and serious distress, might be caused to the island by a blockade, the probabilities of its total reduction by that means alone were remote.

The Governor of Barbados, Sir Thomas Robinson, likewise demurred to detaching troops from his garrison, though he thought men might be provided from other islands which would be sufficient to undertake some smaller operation such as the capture of Tobago; or a raid, with plunder as its object, on Trinidad. The Governor's views were of rather a buccaneer kind, and were moreover tinged with that poor form of local jealousy which views prosperity in any territory but its own with a jaundiced eye. He advanced strongly the selfish and shortsighted objections, raised by the planters of Barbados, that it would be undesirable to capture and settle St Lucia as it might damage the commercial interests of Barbados<sup>1</sup>.

If the Admiralty were really impressed with the strategic value of St Lucia, and believed that its occupation would be of value in a naval campaign in the West Indies, their better course would have been to organise a force themselves to send out to take it. The garrisons of the islands were sufficient for self-defence, and although there was no reason why these troops should not be used for outlying expeditions—as had been done with the Antigua garrison in Knowles's attack upon La Guayra—there was every possibility that the Governors would be

<sup>1</sup> Thus the selfish British colonial policy of the day, which at least had many sound reasons for its maintenance, was fully balanced by the conduct of the planters themselves towards any prospective rivalry. Their refusal to lend negroes in 1741 has already been noticed. Their behaviour during the siege of Brimstone Hill when they actually rendered assistance to the enemy will be recollected by readers of the history of that event.

disinclined to expose their islands to the danger of a raid, however clearly and cogently it might be pointed out that the danger in the temporary denuding of the local defences was small. Nelson's remarks, previously quoted, as to the responsibilities of an officer are apposite also to this case. If the capture of St Lucia bore no particular significance to the campaign, or to our strategical situation in the West Indies, if it was an enterprise to be undertaken merely for the purpose of annoying the enemy and putting them to some inconvenience, the permissive method of arranging the expedition would have been sufficient; but if they accepted Knowles's views that the place had a strategic value such that its occupation would seriously influence the West Indian campaign it was wholly insufficient to give instructions which did not make this point clear and to send, or provide for, no force competent to capture and hold the island.

When Townsend arrived at Antigua on September 21st he received the replies from the Governors concerning the proposed expeditions. He called a council of eight captains to discuss what action they should take. It was agreed that it would be impossible to conduct operations against either St Lucia or Porto Rico without more troops than the small detachment which St Kitts was inclined to spare; and as no attacks could be made without a sufficient military force the best thing the squadron could do would be to blockade Martinique and the other French islands, distress them by cutting off supplies, intercept the French trade and protect that of Great Britain<sup>1</sup>. The squadron therefore sailed on October 3rd and began a steady cruise off Guadeloupe, Dominica and Martinique, as a result of which the whole of the French trade between these islands was held up. A few prizes were taken and run ashore, and the presence of the squadron practically stopped all sailings. Townsend had been at sea just four weeks when he effected his first direct serious blow. On the 31st October at 7 A.M. the 'Hind,' which had been detached the day before to scout, made the signal for sighting a fleet. Sail was at once crowded, and soon forty vessels were seen rounding the south end of Martinique, in shore and to windward of the squadron. Shortly after it was made out that the escort consisted of two ships only, the 'Magnanime' and 'Rubis.' The Admiral, who on sighting the enemy had made the signal for the line of battle, at once hoisted that for general chase. Havoc was played with the enemy's convoy. It scattered, endeavouring to reach the safety of the shore. Some ships escaped, by running direct to leeward, but many were run ashore to the northward and southward of Fort

<sup>1</sup> Council of war on board 'Dorsetshire.' September 28th, 1745. In letters.

Royal, others were taken in the open water. Du Guay<sup>1</sup>, the French Commander, ran his ship aground under the guns of the Fort Royal, the 'Rubis' did the same under the protection of a battery. Townsend was unable to reach either of the men-of-war in these positions so the afternoon was spent cutting out the merchant ships which had taken the ground and burning and destroying those which could not be got off. Fourteen vessels were taken that day. Next morning the work was continued; the 'Ipswich' and 'Dreadnought' were sent in to try to destroy the 'Rubis,' but the water was too shoal and the fire of the battery too hot for them, and they hauled off. After one more day in which the remains of the merchant fleet within reach were destroyed, Townsend returned to Antigua with his squadron. Over 30 sail had been taken, burnt or destroyed; the blow was a severe one to Martinique.

So far as Townsend's information went the French had now no force in the West Indies except a squadron of three ships<sup>2</sup> under Commodore Macnémara, which had left the Ile Rhé at the same time as du Guay and after reaching the Caribbean Sea had parted company and proceeded to Hispaniola with about 80 sail of merchants. As his squadron was therefore stronger than the situation demanded, and the Leeward Islands were in no danger, Townsend sent the 'Lenox' and 'Worcester' to Jamaica to strengthen Davers, and utilised the rest of his squadron cruising to windward of the Antilles. Two ships were kept off Martinique, five between Dominica and Barbados; Lee with four more was sent to convoy the home-going trade to the northward. Prince Rupert's Bay was used as a base for cruising, and by steadily keeping the squadron in this area the French trade and islands were seriously distressed. Towards the end of November the Admiral returned to Barbados where he remained till the 9th January. With such a complete command of these waters as he possessed there would have been no danger in sending troops from any of the islands to capture St Lucia, which enjoyed a wholly undeserved immunity.

Meanwhile Warren at Louisbourg had not yet received the troops to reinforce his garrison, and both he and Shirley had written home representing that the French were making preparations to recover the fortress in the spring. The Admiralty had therefore sent orders to Townsend to proceed to Louisbourg and strengthen the squadron—a repetition, it will be observed, of those of 27th July which had

<sup>1</sup> Du Guay's fleet was a portion of the great fleet which was assembling at Rochelle in July; his safety on leaving France was due to the insufficiency of the western squadron.

<sup>2</sup> 'Invincible,' 'Jason' and 'Galante' were reported; but Macnémara had actually five ships.



missed him at Gibraltar on his way out. He therefore dropped down to Antigua with three ships<sup>1</sup> and turned the command over to Lee in preparation for leaving. He was not, however, to be permitted to go without serious protests from the Governors of Barbados and Antigua, who, so soon as they heard of his intended departure, begged him not to reduce the strength on the station. Townsend endeavoured to reassure them. He pointed out that the reason for the increase of strength which he had brought out was the presence of the French squadrons, and these having returned to France there was now no necessity for so many ships to remain in the West Indies. He assured them that if the French should again send out a force, proper measures would be taken by the Government to prevent harm from being done to the trade in these parts; and, leaving these assurances for their security to allay their fears, he sailed with seven large ships<sup>2</sup> on the 31st January, 1746, for Cape Breton. Bad weather on his passage to Bermuda forced him back to Antigua to refit; he eventually reached Louisbourg on May 9th with three ships, the remainder having returned to England with the trade.

Lee now resumed the command in the Leeward Islands. His squadron consisted of eight ships and large frigates<sup>3</sup>, but the number of small craft was wholly inadequate. The French were in no force, as Townsend had truly said. Macnémara's squadron was to leeward; and although the 'Magnanime' and 'Rubis' had been refloated at Fort Royal, and another squadron of four ships was on its way out, Lee was in a position to deal with any of them singly, and he considered it highly improbable that Macnémara would come to windward. This proved correct; it fell to Davers with the Jamaica squadron to deal with him off Cap François.

Davers had remained at Port Royal since August, 1745, lamenting the weakness of his squadron and deploring the fact that it had been impossible for him to attack the French convoys. His force was soon after still further diminished by the loss of the 'Prince of Orange,' which he had to send home with a large convoy on August 20th. When, however, the danger to Jamaica was past he felt that he could once more scatter his ships cruising separately on trade attack and protection. He was also reassured, through intercepted letters, that

<sup>1</sup> 'Suffolk,' 70; 'Severne,' 50; and 'Kingston,' 60.

<sup>2</sup> 'Dorsetshire,' 'Pembroke,' 'Ipswich,' 'Princessa,' 'Kinsale,' 'Kingston,' 'Hampshire' and 'Hind.'

<sup>3</sup> 'Suffolk,' 70; 'Woolwich,' 50; 'Severne,' 50; 'Dreadnought,' 60; 'Sutherland,' 50; 'Gosport,' 44; 'Argyle,' 50; 'Lyme,' 20; 'Comet,' bomb, 8; and 'Richmond,' 20—the last-named a prize bought in for £3125. The 'Sutherland' and 'Gosport' arrived on February 8th.

the strategy of the French was confined to commerce protection by convoy. He had indeed received a copy of that agreement between the King and the merchants to which reference has already been made. This bargain may go some way towards explaining the manner in which the French fleet was used; besides preserving the trade, it was earning money for the King, and it is not to be wondered at that the commanding officers should have received instructions rather to avoid action than to expose to any risk the earners of the King's dividends.

On August 5th, 1745, des Herbiere de l'Etanduère, who had escaped from Martin in the beginning of April on his way out, sailed unmolested from Hispaniola homeward with the trade, escorted by four large ships and a frigate<sup>1</sup>. Davers, owing to the weakness of his force, was unable to keep a squadron cruising off Cap Nicholas which would have been the only sure means of intercepting him. The French outward bound squadron of five ships under Macnémara, for the same reason, arrived in safety with its large convoy early in November; while another five ships of the Spanish squadron under Reggio—part of a force of eleven ships at Havana—was reported to have been cruising between Cape Antonio and Honda Bay on the look out for British homeward bound trade. It is easy to say that Davers should have massed all his heavy ships and blockaded Cap Nicholas or gone in the opposite direction in search of the Spanish squadron; but he could not tell how long he might have to blockade Cap Nicholas, and unless he could relieve his ships in turn he could not maintain the blockade. As to seeking out Reggio, he did not get the information that the Spanish Admiral was cruising in those parts till he had already been doing so for a considerable time; and if Davers should have collected his ships and gone after him he might well have found that Reggio was back in Havana. In any case he could not long have sustained the great effort which would have been necessary. The result of the effort would have been to exhaust the powers of the squadron and render it incapable of any service for some considerable time afterwards. If success crowned the attempt and Davers fell in with and destroyed Reggio, Macnémara or whatever commander he sought, the temporary exhaustion of the squadron would be justified, but if he failed—and the probabilities were if anything against success—the effect would have been disastrous in the extreme. Davers adopted the strategy of direct defence by convoy; and, when other examples of the two different methods are considered, it is hard to say that he would

<sup>1</sup> 'Juste,' 76; 'Caribou,' 60; 'Ardent,' 64; 'Alcide,' 66; and 'Mutine,' 26.

have done better had he followed the policy of great but spasmodic efforts<sup>1</sup>.

The arrival of the 'Lenox' and 'Worcester' from the Leeward Island squadron in August put Davers in a better position, and in the beginning of September he took a squadron to sea to cruise to windward; but he met with none of the enemy's squadrons and little of their trade. After ten weeks at sea he returned to Port Royal on November 16th with his squadron deficient in all kinds of stores, and he experienced great difficulty in refitting the ships. This attempt to cruise continually without sufficient relief exhausted his squadron, and it was some months before he could send out any large number of ships. When, therefore, early in December, he received news that six ships of the Guipuscoa Company were about to sail in a month's time from La Guayra he was wholly unable to send a squadron even that short distance to intercept them. Such ships as he had fit for service had just sailed from Jamaica, under Captain Cornelius Mitchell, with the homeward bound trade.

Mitchell sailed on November 27th from Port Royal with the 'Strafford,' 60, 'Plymouth,' 60, and 'Lyme,' and 32 sail of merchants in his convoy. He beat up to the Windward Passage and at 6 A.M. on the 15th December, was about 30 miles to the west by north of Cap Nicholas. The 'Lyme' was scouting some distance ahead, the 'Plymouth' was a long way astern—she had become separated the night before in order to bring up the leewardmost and sternmost of the convoy and had not yet recovered her station. Shortly after daylight the 'Lyme' made the signal for sighting a fleet to the south and east. Mitchell ordered her to stand towards it, and by 9 o'clock, being able to see the sails of the strangers, he signalled his convoy to bring to, and carried the 'Strafford' down to join the 'Lyme,' followed at some considerable distance by the 'Plymouth.' By 11 o'clock the strange fleet was made out to be French, and to consist of 23 sail of merchants accompanied by three ships of force. It was Macnémara with the homeward bound trade from the south-western ports of Hispaniola.

The sea breeze came in and reached the French about noon; the merchants at once made all possible sail and raced back towards the bight of Léogane while the men-of-war formed line of battle. Mitchell brought to to allow the 'Plymouth' to come up from astern, which she did about 3 o'clock. The Commodore then asked Captain Dent of the 'Plymouth' "what he thought of these ships and whether we were

<sup>1</sup> The great effort made in 1755 to intercept the French going to Canada crippled the forces available at home and was said by the Admiralty to be one reason that no squadron was available to protect Minorca. See *N.R.S.* vol. XLII.

The policy of the younger Pitt tended in the same direction. Cf. also the effect of Walcheren on the campaign in the Peninsula.

a match for them"; to which Dent replied that the best way to find out was to try<sup>1</sup>. The squadron thereupon bore down towards the enemy and came within gunshot by 4 o'clock, when the French opened fire first with a broadside. For about two hours an action continued, Macnémara continually wearing and working back towards his convoy. Neither commander came to close quarters. Dent, in answer to a hail from Mitchell as to what he thought about it, replied that they were "too warm for us." At dark Mitchell, after again consulting Dent, broke off the engagement and hauled his wind to the northward. Macnémara thereupon put his helm down, followed the English squadron for a short distance, and then returned to his own convoy.

Macnémara's squadron consisted of a 74, a 64 and a 36-gun frigate, and was undoubtedly superior to Mitchell's of two 60's and a 20. The losses however on the English side were slight<sup>2</sup>, and the action does little credit to either commander. It is true that Macnémara chased Mitchell a short distance after the latter went about to rejoin his fleet, but during the two hours of the engagement when the French Commander might have attempted a close action, he contented himself with falling back towards his own convoy and keeping at a long range. Besides his superior strength he had the advantage that his convoy was in no danger as it could regain the shelter of Léogane quickly, whereas Mitchell's was in the open water far from any British ports and exposed to the danger of privateers. No notice was taken of Mitchell's conduct by Davers, who gave him command of another squadron directly he returned to harbour; but two years later, when a case of misconduct was charged against Mitchell concerning another action, he was tried by Court Martial for his behaviour in the action off Cap Nicholas. He defended his behaviour on the grounds that the particular service upon which he was engaged—the protection of the convoy—the comparative strength of the squadrons, the situation of both, the time the engagement began and ceased, were circumstances which absolved him from censure<sup>3</sup>. The Court was unanimous in opinion that the squadron would have lost company with the convoy if Mitchell had run further to the southward, that he was obliged to keep touch with it, and that the enemy were superior; and for these reasons he was acquitted.

Thus by the end of 1745, the twenty months of war with France had produced no campaign of importance in the West Indies. The greater events in Europe had absorbed the attention of both Governments, and operations in the Caribbean Sea had practically been confined to the defence, principally by convoy, of the trade of each belligerent.

<sup>1</sup> Evidence of Lieut. Affleck. Court Martial on Mitchell.

<sup>2</sup> 'Strafford,' 5 killed, 8 wounded; 'Plymouth,' 8 killed, 14 wounded.

<sup>3</sup> Mitchell's defence. Court Martial on Com. Mitchell.



## CHAPTER XI

### ROWLEY'S COMMAND IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

1744—1745

ADMIRAL WILLIAM ROWLEY who took over the command of the Mediterranean fleet on August 24th, 1744, was then about 54 years of age. His early services had been largely in small vessels. He had been on half pay since 1728, was appointed to the 'Barfleur' in 1741, and since that time had first commanded, and later hoisted his flag on board her. Except for some sneers from Lestock his conduct in the battle of Toulon had not been criticised<sup>1</sup>.

Rowley's first movement after taking command was the transfer of the Mediterranean fleet from the coast of Italy to the westward, in consequence of the changing conditions of the sea campaign in the end of August, 1744. He arrived at Port Mahon on September 13th and there received fuller intelligence as to the size, whereabouts and movements of the enemy's squadrons. Those at Toulon and Carthagera, numbering respectively 16 and 17 sail, were reported to have put to sea, and, from the fact that another 14 sail of French ships were at Cadiz, he inferred that the intention was to effect a junction of the whole of these 47 ships either within or without the Straits of Gibraltar. The unfortunate convoy of victuallers which had been the source of so much anxiety was, so far as he knew, still at Lisbon, and a fleet of about 24 merchant vessels was lying in Port Mahon in hopes of escort for its voyage home.

Rowley had with him 27 great ships, five<sup>2</sup> of which he was under strict injunctions to send home to England at once. Provided therefore the Carthagera squadron had not yet joined the ships outside the Straits, his force was approximately equal to it, and he resolved to sail to the westward, convoying the trade, as soon as the five ships bound to England were made ready for their voyage. Welcome news reached him September 26th. Early in the morning of that day the 'Kennington' sailed into Port Mahon bringing a messenger from the

<sup>1</sup> The 'Barfleur' had 18 killed and 30 wounded in that engagement.

<sup>2</sup> 'Namur,' 'Neptune,' 'Barfleur,' 'Marlborough,' 'Somerset,' 'Torbay,' 'Buckingham,' 'Warwick,' 'Oxford,' 'Romney,' 'Folkestone,' 44; 'Winchelsea,' 24; 'Dursley,' 20; 'Mercury,' F.S., were all under orders for home; five of the great ships were to be sent at once and five when a reinforcement should arrive from England.

Admiralty with information that Sir John Balchen had been ordered to sea with a strong squadron to carry the convoy in safety to Gibraltar; and a few hours later the 'Lowestoft' brought information from Osborn, the senior officer of the force detached by Mathews, not only that the convoy had arrived at the Rock, but better still, that Balchen was then blockading the enemy in Cadiz with a superior Anglo-Dutch squadron.

This favourable turn of affairs simplified Rowley's task. Provided the Carthagenan squadron was not still at sea, he need only see the trade as far as Gibraltar, whence it could proceed homeward, covered from interference from Cadiz by Balchen. The defence of Italy remained to be provided for. If the Carthagenan ships were still out, it would be impossible to say whether they would have gone west to join their allies, or east to carry Spanish troops to Naples. Therefore the first and most important thing was to go straight to Carthagenan and base further movements on the results of a reconnaissance of the port.

This fair situation was but short lived. A bare three days passed by, when a letter arrived from Osborn, dated September 20th, reporting that Balchen had been obliged to raise the blockade and return to England, leaving 18 sail of Frenchmen in or about Cadiz. The arrival at Mahon of five very valuable merchantmen, belonging to the Levant Company, increased the rigour of the situation. Rowley now had a fleet of merchant ships to whose defence he must give attention, a considerable French force was at Cadiz free to move, and a Spanish squadron of about the same strength was in a position unknown. His ships were ready to sail; a prompt departure with the trade promised the most security, as he might pass Cadiz before the two squadrons joined, if such were their intention. This, then, he decided to do, and, like Haddock before him, to carry the trade to the westward until clear of Cape St Vincent. An encounter with the enemy was fully expected, and in anticipation of it, he laid up all his small ships of no fighting value in Port Mahon, taking their crews to reinforce those of the ships of the line.

The wind did not serve until the end of the first week in October, when Rowley got to sea with a fleet of 30 ships of the line, six large frigates and nearly 40 merchant vessels. He sent the 'Rupert' and 'Guernsey' ahead to look into Carthagenan, and followed on the same course with the whole fleet in hopes of meeting the Spaniards. The whereabouts of their force was finally settled on October 14th when it was learned that the whole squadron, 22 sail in number, was in harbour, 16 of them with their sails bent and six with their topmasts through the cap.

The Spaniards were thus accounted for; they apparently had no intention of coming to sea in presence of Rowley's superior squadron, though whether they meant to go to the eastward when the way was clear could not be said. The security of the trade now formed the Admiral's immediate concern, and was not to be abandoned in favour of whatever problematical move might be intended by the enemy. Rowley therefore steered away for Gibraltar, and passing through the Straits, was joined off Europa Point on the 18th by Osborn's squadron. Off Spartel on the 20th he dropped Captain Cooper with a small squadron of observation<sup>1</sup> to watch Cadiz, while he carried the trade thirty more leagues to the westward, and then detached it on its homeward journey under the convoy of the ships ordered to England<sup>2</sup>.

The French, who had been cruising in the Straits, no sooner had news that Rowley was coming than they broke up into three squadrons and scattered. Cooper, who parted company from Rowley on the night of the 20th, fell in with the largest body of six ships of the line at daylight next morning. The enemy at once chased, and were joined off Cape Trafalgar by three more sail, but Cooper was fortunately able to regain Gibraltar in safety. The nine French sail then passed into the Mediterranean. It was truly a stroke of bad fortune; a difference of a few hours later, and it would have been Rowley with his whole fleet instead of Cooper with his detachment who would have met the French, and moreover, would have been between them and their port.

This return of some of the French ships into the Mediterranean brought the situation of the allied squadrons to very much what it had been in the preceding August. The main Spanish squadron was still at Carthagená, and a force of some 12 ships, possibly less, appeared to be at Toulon. The British squadron however was in stronger case. The ships detached under Osborn had rejoined, and the victuallers and storeships were at last safe at Gibraltar in the hands of the Admiral. He would now be able to refit and victual his squadron and resume his operations, but first he must get the victuallers to Mahon and with that object he returned through the Straits, picked up the convoy and re-entered the Mediterranean.

When the squadron reached Formentera and was clear of possible interference from Carthagená, Rowley detached Osborn with 13 sail<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 'Stirling Castle,' 'Guernsey,' 'Chatham' and 'Roebuck.'

<sup>2</sup> 'Namur,' 'Somerset,' 'Buckingham,' 'Warwick,' 'Romney,' 'Oxford,' 'Folkestone,' 'Dursley,' galley; 'Deptford,' storeship; and 'Mercury,' fireship. All were in need of extensive repairs.

<sup>3</sup> 'Princess Caroline,' 'Russell,' 'Chichester,' 'Dorsetshire,' 'Essex,' 'Revenge,' 'Bedford,' 'Burford,' 'Stirling Castle,' 'Dragon,' 'Worcester,' 'Hampshire'; 'Spence,' sloop; 'Ann,' tender.

to Vado Bay, with instructions to supply himself from the cattle provided there and cruise until December 15th. The instructions he gave to Osborn, ran as follows:

"If in your passage to Vado you should meet with any certain intelligence of any squadron of the enemies' men-of-war, convoy of merchantmen, or transports, you are to use your utmost endeavours to take, sink, burn or otherwise destroy them. Should you meet with any of the enemies' men-of-war or convoy of transports in any port or place on the coast of Italy or places belonging to any of the Princes or States of Italy (Genoa and Leghorn excepted), you are to use your utmost endeavours to destroy them. If you meet with any ships or vessels belonging to any Prince or State joined with the enemies of his Majesty you are to seize the same and bring them to me." Once arrived on the coast and revictualled and watered, the squadron had other functions to perform. The command of the sea communications of the enemies' armies then were to take a second place, and the principal object of the squadron was to be an attack upon French trade. Thus the instructions continued:

"And as I have received certain intelligence that there is a convoy with a fleet of French merchantmen coming from the Levant, as soon as the ships under your command shall be watered and ready for sea, and joined by your ships from Genoa, you are to proceed in quest of the same convoy as far as the island of Malta, if you shall judge proper, sending ashore to the Consul for intelligence, and according to what accounts you shall gain from him of the enemy's ships you must govern yourself either to go in quest of them or to lie to intercept their cruising off the said island or the coast of Barbary, continuing on that station if the service requires it for ten days and then make the best of your way to Port Mahon to join me."

For the time, it is true, the sea communications of the armies had dwindled in importance, and the same squadron of three frigates<sup>1</sup> which Rowley had left on the Roman coast in the preceding September seemed sufficient to provide for the services required, so long as no serious attempt was made to reinforce the Spanish army from Barcelona. De Gages and Lobkowitz had both gone into winter quarters, and in the eastern theatre the only maritime operations consisted in preventing small reinforcements and supplies from passing into the country. In the western theatre, the French, Spanish and Piedmontese armies had fought a sanguinary campaign in the Alps, in which, after capturing Castel-Delphino and Demonte, the Franco-Spanish army had been brought to a standstill by a stubborn defence of Cuneo by

<sup>1</sup> 'Antelope,' 'Diamond,' 'Kennington.'



Baron Leutrum. Unable to penetrate further or to feed his army where he was, Don Philip and his French allies had abandoned the advance, and retired into winter quarters in Nice, Dauphiné and Savoy. Thus at this moment Rowley felt he was under no necessity of sending a squadron of any size to the coast of Italy for cooperation with the armies of Austria and Sardinia. There was however another point towards which it seems impossible his attention could not have been drawn. Nine sail of the line had recently returned to Toulon and he was aware there were probably other ships in the port. Yet, for some reason which does not appear in his correspondence, he took no steps to watch them, but sent Osborn to cruise in the Malta channel and elsewhere to intercept the Levant trade. This convoy was unquestionably valuable and of great importance to France, and, unless we impute unworthy motives to Rowley, it can only be concluded that he considered, as Pontchartrain had done on an earlier occasion, that the capture of this rich prize was worth more than defeating or masking the naval forces of the enemy. The step he took was an untoward one; for not only did Osborn miss the convoy in the broader waters of the Mediterranean, but one of the French squadrons sailed in immunity from Toulon in November and proceeded to Lisbon where it arrived in December, afterwards to prove a thorn in the sides of our squadrons in home waters and the West Indies. Osborn returned, very much damaged by continual bad weather, in the early days of January and rejoined the flag at Minorca.

Rowley meanwhile remained at Mahon busily refitting his ships, and sending out small cruising squadrons as necessary<sup>1</sup>. From some of these he gradually learned that a general re-transfer of the French ships was being made into the Atlantic till by the end of January it appeared that there were but four sail of French ships remaining in Toulon. Six ships under Caylus had sailed from Cadiz for the West Indies on January 6th; another eight appeared to be using Cadiz as a base and cruising so far as St Vincent to meet home-coming French and Spanish trade, in conjunction with a small though uncertain number of Spanish ships. The two main centres of activity were thus Cadiz and Carthage, at each of which there appeared to be squadrons of about 12 sail of the line and several frigates.

The news that the French were evacuating the Mediterranean had

<sup>1</sup> E.g. Hawke and four ships sent in December to cruise off St Vincent to seek four French ships reported cruising off St Vincent (Rowley's orders of December 10th). Ambrose with a ship, three frigates and two sloops to cruise about Gibraltar. 'Antelope,' 'Diamond' and 'Kennington' kept on coast of Italy. 'Feversham,' 'Liverpool' and 'Seaford' to cruise on coast of Barbary. 'Nonsuch' and 'Chatham' to cruise between Cabrera and Majorca.

at the same time reached the Ministry in London. A redistribution of force was clearly required, and a new set of instructions was prepared, dated January 18th, 1745, and sent to Rowley by the Duke of Newcastle. These instructions—after the necessary formal preliminaries—ran thus:

“By the disposition of the French fleet, it is supposed there can be few or no French ships left at Toulon and that the Spanish squadron at Carthagená may proceed through the Straits to join the French ships at Cadiz. Should this be so the squadron under your command, consisting, as I am informed by the Admiralty, of 35<sup>1</sup> ships of the line of battle, will be many more than can be wanted for any service, to be performed in the Mediterranean or on the coast of Italy. It is therefore his Majesty's pleasure that you make careful enquiry as to what strength the French have at Toulon, and if you find, as we are informed here, that the French squadron, or the greatest part of it, has gone through the Straits and that there are but few French or Spanish men-of-war at Toulon, that you proceed with the greatest part of your squadron off Carthagená, leaving a sufficient strength under the command of Commodore Osborn, or such other officer as you may think proper, to perform all services on the coast of Italy that may be necessary for the security and defence of the states of the King of Sardinia, the Queen of Hungary and the Great Duke of Tuscany; and you will make the proper disposition of the ships so to be left for obstructing the passage and motions of the Spaniards as far as may be practicable, and for preventing the landing of any fresh troops from Spain into Italy; for which purpose a few ships of the line with the smaller ships of your squadron may be sufficient. But you will be best able to judge of what may be necessary for this important service, which you will take care in all respects may be effectually provided for<sup>2</sup>.” The instructions further directed him to follow the Carthagená squadron if when he arrived he found it had gone to join the French at Cadiz: if it should remain at Cadiz or operate from that port to protect the home-coming ships from the West Indies, or to attack British convoys to the Mediterranean, he was “to cruise in such a station to intercept the home-coming ships, or to attack and destroy the combined fleet of France and Spain.” But if he should learn that the combined fleet, or the French alone “are sailed northward, probably to Brest (where a squadron is getting ready), as this can only be to attack the coasts

<sup>1</sup> Actually 34 when this reached Rowley, viz. three of 90, eight of 80, ten of 70, five of 60 and eight of 50; of which one was laid up and unserviceable and two had taken home witnesses for the Lestock Court Martial.

<sup>2</sup> Duke of Newcastle to Admiral Rowley, January 18th, 1745. *S.P. Dom. Naval.*

of Great Britain," he was at once to detach ten ships and a 40-gun ship, or as many more as circumstances should require, with all despatch, to Plymouth for orders, and himself return to the Mediterranean with the remainder and join the ships he had left there.

If the French and Spanish ships remained at Cadiz or should cruise from Cadiz to meet the home-coming de Torres, and none should go to the northward, Rowley was directed to cruise with the objects of intercepting de Torres, and of destroying the combined fleet. If the French and Spaniards should repossess the Straits, and return to the Mediterranean, Rowley was to follow them with all his force. Finally if the Spanish squadron were found to be in full strength at Carthage, he was to remain in the Mediterranean and only detach ten ships and a "forty" to England if the French ships from Cadiz should go to the northward.

Before these comprehensive instructions could reach him information indicating fresh activities of the armies in Italy had been received by the Admiral. So early as December 27th, 1744, Mr Birtles had written from Genoa that 4500 Spanish troops under the Marquis Castellar had arrived at Oneglia, that the main Spanish army was following, and that provisions, artillery and stores were being poured into Genoese territory both by land and water. Everything pointed to a return of the enemy to the Riviera. The Alps had proved so serious an obstacle that an advance along the coast, provided Genoese permission could be obtained, was most probable. The whole recent attitude of Genoa indicated that such permission would be forthcoming, and Villette wrote from Turin urging that a fleet of ships and bomb vessels should be sent to the coast as soon as possible, as the protection of Lombardy without naval assistance would be most difficult. Rowley, on receiving these letters, at once despatched Hawke<sup>1</sup> with the 'Berwick,' 'Lowestoft' and 'Leopard' to the Genoese coast, with orders to cut off the town and to intercept all supplies passing by water.

The reports as to the intended advance of the enemy were correct. The Courts of Paris and Madrid had agreed not to renew the attempt to enter Piedmont by the Alpine passes, but to return to the original Spanish plan of an advance through Genoa, in which de Gages was to cooperate from the southward by marching through Tuscany if possible. Genoa herself had over 14,000 men under arms who might assist the Spaniards. The British squadrons having left the coast, the prime

<sup>1</sup> Hawke had returned from his cruise off St Vincent on January 9th; he had learned there were 18 sail of French and Spanish ships in Cadiz, and after consultation with his captains, deemed it prudent to return to Mahon. He was sent to the coast of Genoa on January 11th, 1745.

obstacle to this movement was removed<sup>1</sup>. The few ships remaining could not guard the great length of coast, and in the early days of February a reinforcement of 3000 men with provisions and ammunition made a safe sea passage to Nice from Barcelona.

When Newcastle's instructions of January 18th reached Rowley he strengthened the squadron on the coast of Italy very considerably, sending Captain Ambrose with seven large and ten small craft to cooperate with the armies of the allies; and, in order to intercept any further reinforcements which might be sent from Barcelona, he detached yet another division<sup>2</sup> to cruise between that port and Ivica. With the two main points of military interest thus under observation, Rowley pressed forward the repairs of his leaky and dilapidated ships so that he might have as complete a squadron as possible for the coming summer, in which he anticipated a course of continuous sea cruising.

By the end of March the squadron was ready for sea, and Rowley put out from Port Mahon with 26 ships, which represented his entire fleet, those away already cruising on the Italian and Catalanian coasts alone excepted. He stood over to Barcelona where he was joined by the five ships watching that port, and learned from them that the enemy had about 16 or 17 sail ready for sea. His intelligence from Faro indicating that the French had about 10 sail operating from Cadiz, he detached Osborn with the same number to cruise between Spartel and St Vincent, and himself took up a position with the remaining 16 ships off Carthageria, where he proposed to cruise and blockade the Spanish squadron and so provide against any move they might be intending to make<sup>3</sup>. Osborn's squadron had the additional duty of looking for an outward bound convoy which was known to be on its way under the command of Rear-Admiral Henry Medley, who was coming out as second in command in the Mediterranean.

Although Medley got his convoy away from its base port comparatively soon after receiving his orders, it, like others, took a long time to get clear of the Channel. Instructions for its departure were dated January 24th, 1745, the ships were collected at Spithead by the middle of February, and, after a pressing order of the 15th of the month directing him to sail with all possible despatch, Medley got to sea on the 24th. He ran however into a severe gale, and was obliged to put

<sup>1</sup> "D'une autre cote, les Anglais n'etaient plus aussi menapants; quelques vaisseaux seulement stationnaient au mois de février devant Hyères [this was Hawke's squadron], Monaco, San Remo et Gènes, croisière insuffisante, non seulement pour gêner la marche d'une armée le long de la cote, mais même pour empêcher les ravitaillements par mer." Pajol, *Les Guerres sous Louis XV*, III, p. 84.

<sup>2</sup> 'Burford,' 'Princessa,' 'Princess Caroline,' 'Revenge' and 'Hampshire.'

<sup>3</sup> In letters. April 1st, 1745. Received May 3rd, 1745.



into Torbay and Plymouth for repairs, whence he eventually sailed on the 15th of April, with a great fleet of 116 sail of merchants, victuallers and storeships bound to Oporto, Lisbon, the East Indies and Mediterranean. On April 23rd he met Osborn's squadron off St Vincent; the Commodore escorted him to Spartel and then returned to his station to the westward, and Medley sailed for Cape de Galt to meet Rowley, who had sent him orders dated April 1st that he would be cruising there. Rowley, however, was further to the northward and when Medley with his convoy arrived off Cape de Galt on the 26th, he saw nothing of his Commander-in-Chief nor any of his ships. Waiting off Carthagea was too ticklish a business in view of the information Medley had received at Gibraltar that 16 sail of Spanish ships lay there ready for sea. A council of war gave the following expression of opinion as to the situation: "We, considering our situation so near an enemy's port, where there is so superior a force, and the uncertainty of finding Mr Rowley, as we have lain between Cape de Galt and Cartagea from ten o'clock last night until two this afternoon without any intelligence of him, are unanimously of opinion that we should bear away and endeavour to gain Port Mahon<sup>1</sup>." Accordingly course was shaped for Minorca, and the next day Rowley's squadron met Medley off Cape Palos. An escort was detached to carry the victuallers to Port Mahon, and the Commander-in-Chief proceeded to cruise off Carthagea. The disposition of his force on May 1st is shewn opposite.

Besides the ships shewn in the following table there were two 44-gun ships and two small vessels engaged upon trade protection.

The squadron under Osborn, which was detached by Rowley when he got off Carthagea, first looked into Cadiz. The Commodore learned that on the 18th March de Piosin had sailed from Cadiz with ten ships, belonging originally to the Toulon squadron, with the object of escorting some West Indies bound ships and meeting others from America, which had been ordered to rendezvous at the Canaries, thence to be convoyed to Spain. Only two enemy ships remained in the harbour. When Rowley heard of this he wrote home, urging that an increase of force might be sent in order to ensure intercepting the French squadron and its convoy. He had received intelligence that de Torres had arrived at Ferrol from Havana, with three or four men-of-war, and he thought that de Piosin might either return direct to Cadiz from the Canaries, or might steer to join de Torres at Ferrol. In the latter case there would not only be no squadron to intercept him, but de Piosin, reinforced by the Ferrol ships, might then come south and overwhelm

<sup>1</sup> Report on the Manuscripts of Lady du Cane. *Hist. Man. Com.* 1905.

British forces	Ships of the line	44 gunships and smaller	Object
<i>Off Carthagena with Rowley :</i>			
'Neptune,' 'Marlborough,' 'Pr. Caroline,' 'Dorsetshire,' 'Berwick,' 'Royal Oak,' 'Cambridge,' 'Stirling Castle,' 'Burford,' 'Nassau,' 'Boyne,' 'Russell,' 'Norfolk,' 'Kingston,' 'Ipswich,' 'Jersey,' ... ..	16		To prevent 16 or 18 sail of Spanish ships from sailing from Carthagena. This force never actually stronger than 13 sail as three are obliged constantly to be absent victualling.
'Diamond,' 2 bombs, 1 fireship ... ..		4	
<i>Off Cadiz with Osborn :</i>			
'Barfleur,' 'Elizabeth,' 'Chichester,' 'Dragon,' 'Worcester,' 'Princessa,' 'Hampshire,' 'Revenge,' 'Torbay,' 'Dartmouth,' 'Essex,' 'Antelope' <sup>1</sup> ... ..	12		To cruise off Spartel and deal with 10 to 12 French and Spanish ships there. These have recently sailed under de Piosin, believed to be gone to Canaries, but are expected soon to return.
1 fireship ... ..		1	
<i>With Ambrose<sup>2</sup> on coast of Italy:</i>			
'Rupert,' 'Bedford,' 'Dunkirk,' 'Guernsey' <sup>1</sup> , 'Non-such' <sup>1</sup> , 'Chatham' <sup>1</sup> ... ..	6		To watch Toulon where de Lage is said to have 6 ships; to cruise on coast of Genoa and stop supplies, etc. To prevent supplies being sent from Naples to the Adriatic. To prevent supplies getting into Naples or passing along Italian coast.
'Roebuck,' 'Liverpool,' 'Seaford,' 'Kennington,' 'Feversham,' 2 bombs and 2 small craft ... ..		9	
	34	14	

Osborn. Rowley therefore asked whether a squadron might be sent from England to cruise off Cape Ortegal. But when his letter reached London there were no ships that could be spared from the Channel for that purpose; indeed, at that very moment a letter was on its way to Rowley reducing his force in the Mediterranean in order to strengthen the Western Squadron which recent events had shewn to be unduly weak, and seven large ships<sup>3</sup> were being ordered to England.

<sup>1</sup> 50-gun ships.

<sup>2</sup> Was relieved by Commodore Cooper on May 10th and sent to England to be tried for conduct on February 11th, 1744.

<sup>3</sup> 'Neptune,' 90; 'Marlborough,' 90; 'Barfleur,' 90; 'Chichester,' 80; 'Torbay,' 80; 'Elizabeth,' 70; 'Dragon,' 60; and 'Kennington,' 20. Instructions of April 12th, 1745.

When he received this order Rowley, feeling that he could no longer afford to divide his force into three squadrons, decided to form two, one of which must be on the Riviera, the other either off Carthage or Cadiz. In the former of these ports lay the Spanish squadron of 16 to 18 sail; the latter was empty but was the base of a squadron operating in the Atlantic. Rowley decided to leave Carthage open and concentrate off Cadiz.

The Admiral's reason for coming to this decision deserves more than a passing notice. He selected the offing of Cadiz as his main cruising ground in order to watch for de Piosin's squadron of ten ships, which, according to information from Mr Cayley at Faro, had not yet returned from its cruise, and was believed to be lying to the westward to meet the Spanish Register ships and a treasure fleet escorted by five Spanish men-of-war from Havana. The situation thus created was clearly a singular one. About 20<sup>1</sup> British ships would be cruising in the approaches to the Straits to intercept a combined squadron of some 15 ships which might or might not be returning to Cadiz. A small British squadron of seven sail was operating off Toulon, from whence a French force of nearly equal strength was endeavouring to support the transport of troops and supplies to the Genoese coast. At Carthage lay a Spanish squadron of 18 sail, all or nearly all of which were ready for the sea, watched only by another small detachment of British ships.

In the face of an energetic enemy such a disposition invited disaster to the British squadron on the Provençal coast, and following that, to Italy. The considerations which influenced Rowley in making such a distribution of his forces are not given in his despatches, though the object, the capture of the treasure fleet, is clearly expressed. This object may have been determined either by the prize money it would bring him, or by the harm the loss of the treasure would cause to Spain. Either of these is possible. Rowley's personal character, as shewn in his correspondence, was unfortunately not such as to permit of the baser supposition being brushed away. He is described by our greatest naval biographer as a man "of slender ability except in the matter of looking out for his own interest," owing to whose selfishness in his relations with Medley "the question of prize money hampered the public service, which in too many instances, was lost sight of in the greed for plunder<sup>2</sup>": a judgment from which it is not possible to differ.

<sup>1</sup> The total number would be 21; but of these some were constantly absent acting as escorts to convoys, and some necessarily at the base for supplies or repair.

<sup>2</sup> Sir John Laughton in the Report on the Manuscripts of Lady du Cane; Introduction, pp. xiv, xv.

On the other hand, we have to remember the important part assigned by the strategists of the day to striking Spain through her treasure, her principal means of supporting the war, her very life blood without which she could neither fight nor exist. Ministers, admirals and merchants were at one on this matter. It had been the British creed from Elizabeth's time, it had governed our strategy very largely throughout this war. In so far as Rowley was conforming to the accepted doctrine of the day, he cannot be condemned; it is not to be expected that every man should move ahead of his times. Indeed one may go further, and far from condemning the move on grounds of military incorrectness, praise the insight and judgment it displays. Instead of assuming the passive function of covering the Riviera squadron—a function so heartily condemned by Cochrane at a later time—he may be said to have adopted the offensive one against a considerable enemy force and an important enemy interest, confident, from his knowledge of Spanish inertia, that he could leave Carthagená unwatched without danger. If these were his thoughts they received some justification by the course of events at Carthagená; during his absence from the Mediterranean the powerful Spanish squadron never stirred from its moorings to accept the invitation offered to it to fall upon the exposed British detachment and destroy it.

In fine, Rowley's movement must not be judged by rule of thumb, catchword or formula. It was bad or good according to the considerations which governed it. Bad, if it was dictated by personal interests, with his eyes open to the danger to which it exposed the interests of the allies; good, if in order to strike a blow at a fighting force and a vital interest of the enemy he so correctly gauged the Spaniard that that which appears a strategic blunder was in reality a bold offensive based upon a nicely calculated appreciation of the Spanish character; the power of forming which is one of the highest gifts of a commander.

Whatever may have been Rowley's reasons, his return to Cadiz proved ill judged in respect of his hopes of intercepting de Piosin and of the course of events on the Italian coast. The French Commander, as Rowley himself had considered probable, returned, not to Cadiz but to the Biscay ports. Thus the largest division of the British Mediterranean squadron had performed no service of greater utility than diverting some Spanish commerce from the southern to the northern ports—a very serious inconvenience doubtless, but one which could produce no material effect on the war.

When Rowley reached Gibraltar in the early days of June he received an urgent letter from Horace Mann, backed by others from Lobkowitz and de Richécourt, asking for a couple of frigates in the



Adriatic. The enemy had the use of the sea communications and a quantity of artillery, bombs and military stores had been embarked at Naples for transport to de Gages's army. The enemy's traffic along the coast, in the absence of a stronger British squadron, was endangering the whole situation in Italy. The Spaniards had got into Genoa, and laid an embargo on all small vessels on the coast to transport corn, provisions and artillery for their army. All the craft at Civita Vecchia had been laden with corn, to be carried to Spezia. Genoa, unable to supply food enough for the army had to import it from other states. Artillery from Viterbo was brought down to Orbitello, thence to be carried by sea to Spezia, the principal port of disembarkation. How important to the enemy was this traffic up the coast is evident. It was the duty of the British Mediterranean squadron to stop it<sup>1</sup>.

In consequence of Mann's representations, Rowley directed Commodore Cooper to detach a 40 and a 20-gun ship to the Adriatic. But this still further reduced the already inadequate squadron on the coast of Italy, and reports teem with accounts of supplies which now reached Genoa from the many Italian ports. Nevertheless Cooper's squadron had a restraining effect on the military operations of the enemy; Genoa had thus far hesitated to declare herself against the allies, and though cannon were embarked at Naples they lay for months on board the transports without moving, so that the Spanish army was much distressed for the want of them. Three French men-of-war<sup>2</sup>, part of the Toulon squadron under de Lage, which were to have been joined by a large number of transports from Marseilles laden with stores and provisions, were obliged to put into Villefranche where they were blockaded by the British squadron, and not only were the transports unable to move, but the smaller British ships by anchoring within musket shot of the shore at San Remo, in a spot commanding three passes, prevented the passage of that part of the convoy which was to have been sent by land. Part of the army under Don Philip, principally cavalry, which was proceeding to join the force at Oneglia, could not move; and as there was no food for the horses to the eastward, and the convoy consisted largely of forage, the cavalry in particular were much hampered. All supplies for the enemy's troops had thereafter to be carried on mule back along a road to the back of the mountains which, besides being very difficult, added eight days to the journey. But the concentration of the British squadron to enable it to block up de Lage and to check the movements along the French Riviera had the effect of leaving the sea partly open, and a convoy of some

<sup>1</sup> *S.P. Dom. Tuscany*, 1745.

<sup>2</sup> One ship 70, one of 60 and one of 50 guns

60 Tartans from Barcelona succeeded in consequence in getting into Genoa. Twenty transports, however, going from Naples to Genoa were taken between June 1st and 7th by the 'Rochester' and 'Lowestoft,' which were working to the eastward. Another five transports, carrying Walloon Guards, and thirty ships laden with corn were blockaded in Leghorn, other vessels were forced to run into Porto Longone, Calvi and other ports to avoid falling into the hands of the British frigates. A correspondent, writing from Florence on June 11th, stated that the Spaniards and Neapolitans at Genoa were "extremely destitute of forage and other necessities, principally on account of the great vigilance and care by the British ships of war on that coast<sup>1</sup>."

One thing, however, and that a great one, the Spaniards had effected on land. By a brilliant series of movements de Gages completely outwitted Lobkowitz and succeeded in joining the Duke of Modena in Genoa. Leaving his headquarters at Viterbo in the end of March, he moved to the river Panaro, crossed it and marched through Modena, Lucca and Massa, reaching the boundary of Genoa at Sarzana in the end of April. He crossed the river Magra on May 4th, fighting with the Austrian rearguard, and reached Chiavari on the 6th. The long-hoped-for junction of the Spanish armies had at last been made; but it had taken three and a half years to effect. If the enemy had commanded the sea communications it need not have taken as many months.

The serious state of affairs in Italy was bound to affect the Mediterranean squadron, the greater part of which, under Rowley, was cruising between Sparte and St Vincent<sup>2</sup>. In the beginning of July Rowley received the orders already referred to<sup>3</sup> that six of his ships were at once to be made ready to go to the West Indies, for the safety of which the Government were now seriously alarmed, as owing to the arrival of Caylus's squadron the French were there in considerable superiority. Rowley at once carried the ships<sup>4</sup> he selected to Gibraltar to clean and make ready, and returned to Villa Nova Road on the 19th

<sup>1</sup> Referring to the loss of a convoy of 27 vessels, laden with corn for the army, Pajol remarks: "La perte de ce convoi, attendu impatiemment, fut vivement ressentie par nos soldats." *Guerres*, vol. III. p. 93.

<sup>2</sup> One useful, though not important service was performed by the 'Jersey,' 50, one of the ships off C. Sparte. She met a convoy of five French ships, bound to the West Indies, under escort of the 'St Esprit,' 74, and handled her so roughly that notwithstanding the disparity of force, the Frenchman and her convoy were obliged to return to Cadiz. Two of them were run ashore on their way by the 'Dartmouth.'

<sup>3</sup> See *ante*, Chap. X, p. 223.

<sup>4</sup> 'Dorsetshire,' 'Princessa,' 'Ipswich,' 'Worcester,' 'Kingston' and 'Hampshire.'

July, to await the arrival of Admiral Townsend, who was coming from England to command the detached squadron.

The day after Rowley sailed from Gibraltar he was overhauled by the 'Guernsey,' which had come with all possible haste from Cooper to represent to the Admiral the condition into which affairs in Italy had fallen. She had on board Villettes, and two Austrian officers of high standing, one of them the brother of General Schulemberg who had recently replaced Lobkowitz in command of the Austrian troops in Italy. They brought letters from the King of Sardinia and Schulemberg informing Rowley that in consequence of the risks to which the Treaty of Worms had exposed her, and her abandonment of any hopes of getting reparation, Genoa had now definitely joined France and Spain<sup>1</sup>. These two powers and Naples, whose troops were now in the territories of the Republic, had promised to protect her, and in view of the strong position in which she appeared to be, she had agreed to join them and to place a body of troops at the disposal of the allies. This was most serious news. Rowley held a consultation with the messengers, and decided that so soon as he had detached the ships for the West Indies he would go to Genoa with a division of the fleet.

Townsend arrived on August 1st, and sailed again on the 3rd. He brought with him an order from the King to Rowley to do what the Admiral had already decided upon in the matter of returning to the Mediterranean; and no sooner had Townsend gone than the Admiral sailed with his whole fleet into the Mediterranean, intending to make a demonstration off Carthagenia in order to impress the Spaniards there with his strength, and when that was done to send Medley back with 14 sail, of which 11 were ships of the line, to the Straits.

Rowley's persistence in keeping a squadron to the westward, even in the critical state of affairs in Italy, is most marked. He gives his reasons in his letter, dated July 5th, in which he reports the visits of the officers of the Austrian Army. Villettes, at this interview, had informed him that France and Spain had agreed in a secret treaty to send a joint naval force to Italy superior to that of England, and to drive the British squadron from the Mediterranean. Such a force would come from Brest. "It may prove of the utmost consequence to prevent a junction of the French ships at Brest with the Spaniards at Carthagenia," so he wrote. He considered also that de Piosin might return with the Toulon squadron; and finally, "Admiral Reggio is expected home with five sail and the treasure from the Havana this summer, which is worth five and a half million dollars."

<sup>1</sup> Genoa had actually signed the treaty of Aranjuez with the Bourbon houses April 21/May 2, but had kept her action secret.

The instructions he gave Medley were to prevent the Spanish ships from Carthagera from passing through the Straits and getting into Cadiz, or the French ships from West France from getting into the Mediterranean. He was to keep himself well informed of what was passing at Carthagera. If he should hear that any of the French ships passed the Straits in such numbers as to make the Toulon squadron (which he counted as six of the line) superior to the British forces on the coast, he was at once to come with his squadron, and join Rowley, sending the fastest ships ahead to warn him.

Again we are driven to the conclusion that Reggio and his treasure were foremost in Rowley's mind; and whether it was for his personal interest or that of the State we can form judgment only according to probabilities. At least it can be seen that he made no attempt to conceal that the dollars were coming and that he intended to do his best to get hold of them. Apart from the treasure no advantage is apparent in his disposition. The ships at Brest should be looked after by the Channel or Western squadron; and, if the enemy did attempt such a concentration as was suggested, the best way of meeting it was not to break up the British force and expose it to defeat in detail. In every case the station off Carthagera would have met the situation better. There, the British squadron would have had its grip on at least one of the enemy squadrons and could hamper its actions whether the French came that way or remained in the Atlantic. It would also have been nearer its natural reinforcement, the ships on the coast of Genoa.

At the same time that he made this new distribution Rowley was suffering a further loss of strength. Another four ships of the line were to return to England with the trade; this would bring his total force down to 23 ships of the line, of which six were 50-gun ships. Its distribution was as follows:

Command	Guns						Sloops and bombs
	90	80	70	60	50	40	
With Rowley on coast of Genoa	1	—	3	1	4	3	9
With Medley off Cadiz, etc. ...	—	5	5	2	2	1	5
Gone to West Indies (Townsend) ... ..	—	1	2	2	1	—	—
Gone home with the Trade (Hawke) ... ..	—	2	1	1	—	1	1

Rowley arrived off Cape Palos on August 12th and took his whole squadron close off Carthagera so that the Spaniards should see and count his force. Then standing out to sea, he detached Medley back



to cruise off the Straits with the force assigned to him<sup>1</sup>, and took the four large ships and four frigates on with him to Mahon. There he anchored on the 18th, watered and victualled, and sailed on the 27th for the coast of Italy. His total strength, all combined, was approximately equal to the Spaniards at Carthage and the French at Toulon. He had chosen to divide it and place 11 of the great ships outside the Straits. How he should use the remainder to assist the common cause, which was the fundamental reason for the presence of a British squadron in the Mediterranean, depended upon the circumstances of the campaign in Italy.

The Franco-Spanish invasion, begun seriously in the end of April on the lines already described, had been uniformly successful. Starting from Nice, the armies had passed along the Riviera, and by the end of May were stretching the length from Oneglia, Loano and Finale back to Nice, whence fresh troops were continually being despatched, strengthened by the Genoese alliance<sup>2</sup>. In June the advance inland began, striking from Loano, Finale and Savona. Acqui surrendered on June 30th and the march of the combined army was continued towards Tortona. On August 24th Tortona capitulated. All was going well for the Franco-Spaniards so far; then began one of those unhappy differences of opinion which ruin campaigns. The year was now well advanced, and the French desired to remain where they were for the winter, securing their position and their communications, in order to start the next year's campaign from a secure base. The Spaniards on the other hand desired to press on with the campaign and make themselves masters of Lombardy, and when the cabinet of Versailles ordered the French commander not to move beyond Tortona, the Spaniards pushed inland by themselves, took Placentia and Parma (September 1st and 5th) and defeated the Austro-Sardinians badly at Bassignano, near Alessandria on September 16th. If the French had then been with them, it is probable that a vital blow might have been struck at the allies.

It was on September 6th while the Spaniards were moving from Parma to Bassignano that Rowley arrived upon the coast from Mahon, in answer to the calls for help from the King of Sardinia. After a passage delayed by head winds, he had met Cooper's squadron of four sail off Cape delle Melle; Rowley's reinforcement brought the

<sup>1</sup> 'Russell,' 'Princess Caroline,' 'Boyne,' 'Norfolk,' 'Cambridge,' 'Berwick,' 'Nassau,' 'Revenge,' 'Burford,' 'Jersey,' 'Dartmouth.'

<sup>2</sup> Treaty of Aranjuez, May 2nd (N.S.). The Genoese to supply 10,000 men and a train of artillery; the Bourbons in return to guarantee Genoese territory and pay a monthly subsidy. All parties to the treaty were to concentrate their efforts on procuring a kingdom for Don Philip. Pajol, *Guerres*, vol. III. p. 94.

whole force up to 8 sail and some small craft<sup>1</sup>. The steps he should take with this squadron to influence the campaign in the interior now occupied his attention.

The assistance the fleet could give to a campaign in the interior would be confined to denying the enemy the use of the sea for their communications and bringing pressure upon the maritime state of Genoa. To furnish himself with a base of operations the Admiral wished to capture Spezia; and with that object he wrote to the commander of the Sardinian galleys to embark as many troops as he could carry and meet him there. But when he put this proposal before his captains they considered it impracticable, and he gave up the idea. Instead he decided to make a demonstration at Genoa. News, which reached him on the same day that he made this decision, that de Lage had been seen off the western extreme of Sicily homeward bound with three ships and 12 Turkey merchants gave him a second objective, and he despatched Cooper with four ships to Hyères to intercept the enemy. With the remainder and the bombs he carried out a long range bombardment of Genoa on September 17th. Very little harm was done, none of any military importance. On the 18th he bombarded Finale, throwing 200 shell into the town and receiving the fire of the forts; on the 20th he anchored off San Remo, repeated his bombardment and carried off five settees with provisions—this last the most valuable of a series of singularly ineffective proceedings. M. d'Orves, the commandant at Toulon, dismissed this naval campaign with fitting contempt: "Ces messieurs," he wrote, "tonnent volontiers sur les choux<sup>2</sup>"—a very apt description of this method of making war.

An equal lack of result attended the cruise of Commodore Cooper, who rejoined the flag on the 26th without having seen anything of de Lage. The whole squadron proceeded to Oristano Bay in Sardinia towards the middle of October. During the six weeks it had been on the coast it had not even performed such slight service as lay in its power. The passage of heavy artillery by sea between Naples, the French ports and Genoa, whence it was transported to the army, was but little interrupted. The importance of the artillery was considerable. It was greatly needed by the enemy for the sieges of those fortified places the reduction of which was essential; if it could not have been carried by sea its arrival might have been indefinitely delayed. In the six months before Rowley's arrival, Cooper with a smaller squadron

<sup>1</sup> 'Marlborough,' 90; 'Essex,' 70; 'Stirling Castle,' 70; 'Bedford,' 70; 'Dunkirk,' 60; 'Chatham,' 50; 'Nonsuch,' 50; 'Leopard,' 50; 'Seaford,' 20; 'Terrible' and 'Carcass,' bombs.

<sup>2</sup> Lacour-Gayet, *Marine Militaire sous Louis XV*, p. 159.

had produced greater results; but his force was so inadequate that he had not succeeded in preventing the transport of cannon, stores and troops by sea in great quantities.

On October 12th Rowley received a letter of recall, dated July 15th. As he had held the command only one year, the inference is that the Ministry were dissatisfied with his conduct of affairs. It is hard to say whether they were influenced by the course events had taken in the Mediterranean or by the severe censure passed by the Admiralty on Rowley's share in one of the Courts Martial arising out of the battle of Toulon. Rowley had presided at the trial of Captain Norris of the 'Essex' for that officer's conduct during the engagement, and had shewn the most extraordinary partiality to the son of the Admiral of the Fleet. Norris, who had given up the command of the 'Essex,' served as a volunteer on board Rowley's flagship. When Norris's behaviour became common talk in the squadron he applied for a Court Martial; this Rowley said he could not grant without an order from the Admiralty. Such an order was in consequence sent, and a court was called on January 28th, 1745, which broke up with the resolution that whereas Norris was not in His Majesty's service or pay the Court had no right to determine the matter before them. Converting themselves into a Court of Enquiry, they examined the question of Norris's behaviour; but they gave no opinion on the case as enquirers. The minutes of the Court shewed the strongest marks of partiality to Norris. The lieutenants of the 'Marlborough' who desired to give evidence against him were refused on excuse that they had prejudged the case; and an offer was made to Norris that the enquiry should not proceed without his approbation. Finally, Norris was allowed to leave the fleet a free man. He deserted and never returned to England.

The Admiralty, when the minutes came before them, found that Rowley at least concurred in all these "improper proceedings," and represented that he was a person unfit to remain in command<sup>1</sup>. Notwithstanding this it was not until two months later that he was recalled.

On October 30th, having transferred the command on the coast to Captain Townshend, he sailed with four ships<sup>2</sup> to join Medley at Gibraltar, leaving behind a squadron comprising some small craft, with a backing of four heavy ships<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Letter of May 29th, 1745. *S.P. Dom. Naval*, No. 28.

<sup>2</sup> 'Stirling Castle,' 'Dunkirk,' 'Chatham,' 'Roebuck.'

<sup>3</sup> 'Bedford,' 70; 'Essex,' 70; 'Nonsuch,' 50; 'Leopard,' 50; 'Antelope,' 50; 'Nazareth' (fireship), 'Dragon's' prize; 'Enterprise,' 8; 'Terrible,' 'Carcass,' 'Fire-drake,' 'Lightning,' bombs.

Refitting for the winter passage across the Bay he left Gibraltar on January 9th, 1746, escorted by six ships to guard against a French squadron said to be cruising in those parts.

Admiral Rowley played no further part in the war. But it is singular to observe that in spite of the opinion of the Admiralty that he was unfit to command in the Mediterranean, and of his supercession, he was subsequently appointed a Commissioner of the Admiralty and held office, with one short interval of a few months, from 1751 to 1757; and in 1762 succeeded Anson as Admiral of the Fleet<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> *Dictionary of National Biography.*



## APPENDIX I

## BATTLE OF TOULON

The following extracts from the Journals of Admiral Mathews, Captains Hawke and Watson are inserted to assist to explain the movements that took place in the part of the line to which they refer. The dates are given in the modern style—i.e. midnight to midnight—instead in the style used in the journals.

*Extract from Admiral Mathews's Journal.*

Feb. 10th, p.m. 1 p.m. made signal for line of battle abreast and bore down to the enemy. At  $\frac{1}{2}$  past made the signal and bro<sup>t</sup> to with the larboard tacks. At  $\frac{1}{2}$  past 2 made sail again. At 6 brought to with the headsails to the mast. Ordered 'Essex' and 'Winchelsea' to bring to between our fleet and the enemy's to mind their motions. Kept the signal for the line ahead flying till past 7 o'clock. At midnight the enemy still lying to head to the E.S.E.

Feb. 11th. At 6 made the signal for the line of battle abreast. The Vice-Admiral did not come into the line nor did any of his division. Continued bearing down towards the enemy all the morning. At 8 made the signal for the Vice- and Rear-Admirals' divisions to make more sail. At 10 a.m. made the signal for the line of battle ahead. At 11 the 'Royal Oak' and two tenders from Mahon joined me. At  $\frac{1}{2}$  past hoisted a Red flag at the foretopmast head and fired a gun (the signal to engage) which was repeated by Rear-Admiral Rowley. At noon hoisted a White flag at the foretopmast head and fired a gun. Very soon after hauled it down and hoisted the Red again and fired a gun, the signal for the line ahead still flying. Between 12 and 1 p.m. bore down to the 'Ryall'; about 1 began to engage her; at  $\frac{1}{2}$  past 1 we were on the larboard bow and at the same time the 'Marlborough' on her quarter engaged her. At  $\frac{1}{2}$  past 2 a Spanish ship came to the 'Ryall's' assistance; sent an officer on board the 'Dorsetshire' to order her to bear down and engage. The 'Marlborough's' main mast was brought by the board and carried away the mizzen mast, and the 'Ryall's' main yard was shot away. At 4 p.m. made the signal for the 'Ann' galley Fireship to bear down and fired two shot at her; sent an officer on board to order her to burn the 'Ryall,' she being much damaged. The 'Ann' galley run within a ship's length of the 'Ryall' and there blew up. At 5 five sail of the enemy came to assist the 'Ryall'; wore and stood to the Northward on the starboard tacks and engaged those five sail of the enemy till 6. Night then coming on the engagement ceased. Cape Sicie then bore N.E. dist. 8 or 9 leagues.

At 7 p.m. hoisted my flag on board the 'Russell.' At 8 made the signal and tacked to the Eastward.

Feb. 12th. At 6 a.m. Saw the enemy's fleet bearing S.S.W. At 7 saw two large ships engaging to the S.S.W. At 10 made the signal for the line of battle abreast; sent the 'Oxford' with the 'Marlborough' for Mahon, the enemy's fleet bearing S.S.W. about 10 miles.

P.m. First part little wind and fair weather: the latter fresh gales and hazy. At 2 p.m. made the signals for the Vice- and Rear-Admirals to make more sail and draw into a line abreast. At 6 brought to: the enemy's fleet bore from W.<sup>b</sup>S. to S.W.<sup>b</sup>S. 3 or 4 miles. As we bore down they edged away. At 9 sent the 'Essex' to burn the Spanish 64 gun ship that was disabled yesterday. The French had taken out all the people before the 'Essex's' boats boarded her. At 2 a.m. made the signal for the Vice- and Rear-Admiral to make sail; the enemy not in sight.

13th. Between 6 and 7 brought to and took in all the reefs in the top-sails, then made sail. About 7 a ship ahead made the signal for seeing strange ships, made the Vice-Admiral signal to chase. At 8 made the signal for all cruisers to come in. At 9 brought to.  $\frac{1}{2}$  past 9 made sail. At 11 made the signal for the ships to windward to bear down. At  $\frac{1}{2}$  past wore to the Southward.

*Extract from Journal of Capt. Hawke, 'Berwick.'*

Feb. 11. Little wind and fair weather with the Western swell. About 1 p.m. the Admiral with his 2nd the 'Marlborough' bore down and engaged the Spanish Admiral. At the same time several of our ships in the center began to fire upon the Spainards. Our Vice-Admiral and his Division not being got up to close the line, nor could the Spanish Commodore with his 5 ships get up to close their line, we bore away with our division: Admiral Rowley got to be almost within gun shot of the French Admiral, they began to engage as did the 'Princess Carolina' with another French ship, and we with the headmost of the Spanish ships, receiving part of a French ship's fire upon our bow. At this time I observed that some of our ships ahead of the Rear-Admiral kept their wind of the enemy without engaging. At  $\frac{1}{2}$  past 1, I ordered the foresail to be set with an intent to go alongside the 'Neptune,' a Spanish ship that lay upon our bow, and bore down upon her to come to closer action which she observing made more sail and bore away under the lee of the French, upon which finding I could not come nearer to her without going ahead of the 'Carolina,' obliged me to give over that design, and seeing another Spanish ship that had been some time firing upon our starboard quarter, who had lost her foretopmast in passing some of our ships, and had got her main tack on board, with an intent (as I imagined) to get under the lee of the French, made me continue bearing down till she came abreast of us, within less than musquet shot, then we brought too with the main topsail aback and engaged her; the Rear-Admiral and 'Princess Carolina' continued engaging ahead of us and the 'Norfolk' and the 'Marlborough' astern, the Admiral at that time laying too to windward, seemingly as if disabled. Soon after the Spanish ship which

the 'Norfolk' engaged broke the line and went away. At  $\frac{1}{2}$  past 3 we shot away the Spanish ship's mizzen jeers, soon after the foremast below the parrell of the yard. At this time having but little wind and a great swell occasioned our falling down on her lee bow where we kept a very smart fire with Barr and Grape shot and plyed her with our small arms. At  $\frac{1}{4}$  past 4 shot her main mast away, soon after she struck to us being the 'El Poder,' a Spanish ship of war with 64 guns. I sent my first Lieutenant on board in the barge to take possession of her and ordered him to bring the Captain and some of the officers on board of me. In the meantime examined into the state and condition of our own ship and found our standing and running rigging very much cut, our main and mizzen masts and some of our yards much wounded, most of our sails shot to pieces, some shot in our hull, but six men wounded, one of them mortally: this was owing to their firing so very high or otherwise we must have lost a great many men.

*Extract from Journal of Capt. Watson, 'Dragon.'*

[The 'French'] soon after made more sail and appeared to gain on the body of our fleet; then Admiral Mathews (being a little after one) made the signal to leave off chase and bore down on the Spaniards (which were the sternmost of the enemy's line) as did myself, with his division, steering for the 4th ship ahead of the Spanish Admiral according to my station in the line of battle. About 2 the Admiral in the 'Namur' began to engage the Spanish Admiral in the 'Reall' as also the ships in Admiral Mathews's division the rest of the Spaniards. Admiral Rowley who led with the larboard tacks fell in with the French Admiral who was in the centre of the combined fleets and engaged him very smartly, as did the 'Princess Carolina' her second astern. The 'Somerset' who was stationed astern of me shooting ahead of the ship she engaged (having obliged her to give way) came within me and the ship I was engaged with. I used my endeavour to get clear of the 'Somerset' in order to bring my guns to bear on the enemy and made more sail, but as the 'Bedford' ahead of me did not make sail, and being close under her stern, she at that time keeping a continual firing, obliged me to shorten sail and back astern of the 'Somerset,' and then I veered under the enemy's [stern] and gave her my broadside and stood after another ship to leeward of her, but she bearing away from me and perceiving by following of her I must be carried considerably to leeward of my station and in all likelihood to leeward of the enemy astern, I therefore thought it my duty to haul up again, which I accordingly did. About three the 'Marlborough' who was very hotly engaged with the 'Real' had her mainmast and mizzen mast shot away, but soon after continued making very good fire.

...About  $\frac{1}{2}$  past 4 a Spanish ship called the 'Poder' struck to the 'Bedford' and 'Berwick'...

## APPENDIX II

## INSTRUCTIONS TO ADMIRAL DE COURT

*Memorandum of Instructions to M. de Court,  
Lieutenant-General of the Fleets<sup>1</sup>.*

His Majesty expects that the 21 large ships or frigates, which he has ordered to be commissioned at Toulon, will be ready to sail by the time that M. de Court receives these instructions.

He should know that Don Navarro, who commands the squadron of 16 of the King of Spain's ships which are at Toulon, has been ordered to proceed at the same time, and with his squadron, to join His Majesty's ships in order to carry out together, under the orders of M. de Court, the various duties entrusted to him in the interests of the two Kingdoms.

The first and most important duty entrusted to him by His Majesty is to seek out the British ships under Admiral Mathews and to attack them with his combined fleet, either off Hyères islands or wherever else they may be found.

He has seen by the list of English ships actually in the Mediterranean, which has been sent him, the strength of each ship as regards the number of guns carried.

As regards the crews of these ships he should know that not only have the numbers been greatly reduced since they left England, by mortality and by desertion, but the remainder consist partly of pressed men of all trades, and of soldiers from the garrisons of Mahon and Gibraltar.

M. de Court should also know that all the ships included in this list are not concentrated, Admiral Mathews having detached five to the Adriatic, and several others to the coasts of Italy, Spain, Portugal and Gibraltar.

Under these circumstances there is no reason to doubt that the two squadrons united under the orders of M. de Court will be in superior strength to the English squadron in its present state, and it is His Majesty's intention that M. de Court should not lose a minute in leaving Toulon, and in bringing this squadron to action whenever he may find it. It is all the more important that he should hasten his departure, as Admiral Mathews, hearing of the commissioning of the ships at Toulon, may have ordered the detached ships to rejoin, and that success in the action would be more certain if the English are attacked before having concentrated.

M. de Court should also be informed that five ships are being got ready in English ports to reinforce the English Squadron (viz. the 'Duke,' 90 guns, the 'Cornwall' and the 'Boyne' of 80 guns, and the 'Burford' and 'Suffolk' of 70 guns), but that these ships had not left on the second of this month, and, moreover, that it appeared that only three would start

<sup>1</sup> From the *Archives de la Marine*, Paris.



at first. The destination of these ships is a further reason for not delaying the departure of his fleet, so that he can meet and fight the English Squadron before these ships have joined.

Although His Majesty has sufficient justifiable reasons for declaring war on England, and for ordering M. de Court to attack the English ships which have for so long blockaded the port of Toulon, insulted His Majesty's flag, and hindered the navigation and the commerce of his subjects; yet His Majesty wishes his ships to be employed only as auxiliaries to the Spanish Squadron in this expedition, and desires M. de Court when he is within range of the English ships—if these do not commence the action—to cause them to be attacked first by the Spanish ships, which should engage in such a manner that it cannot be afterwards said that hostile acts have been committed by His Majesty's ships before a declaration of war.

His Majesty leaves it to M. de Court to act in concert with Don Navarro, who will be under his orders, as regards the disposition and movements of the two squadrons, both in the course of ordinary navigation and in action, and he feels convinced that through his arrangements and the measures he thinks fit to take, the operations of the two squadrons will redound to the glory of both Kingdoms.

As the English vessels are weakly manned, as has already been observed, His Majesty is of opinion that in the case of an action the necessary dispositions should be taken beforehand and the necessary orders given to all the Captains of his ships to board as soon as possible, this being the best method of reducing and of taking the enemy's ships.

His Majesty is informed that this was the plan M. de Court had decided on in the month of January, 1742, when he was off the Spanish Coast with the Spanish Squadron which he had been ordered to protect against the same English vessels, which are now in the Mediterranean.

M. de Court will however act according to circumstances<sup>1</sup>. But whatever steps he may determine to take His Majesty expects that, on an occasion as important as this one, for the glory of his forces, and on which His Majesty confides such a considerable part of his naval forces to his keeping, he will give signal proofs of his valour, of his experience and of his good conduct, and that by his example, his good counsel and by every other practicable method he will inspire his Officers to give the same proofs of their courage and zeal for His Majesty's service, to be firmly resolved to revenge the insults offered to his Flag and to the Nation by the English, and to make every endeavour to merit by their actions the rewards and honours that they may expect from His Majesty.

Besides the advantage that the ships under his orders will have over the English ships, by the number and the capability of the Officers, and by the strength and good spirit of the crews, they will also have the advantage of having been lately docked, whilst the English have not been docked for a very long time—which will greatly help M. de Court, not only in engaging the enemy at sea and in being able to handle his ships more

<sup>1</sup> "Elle s'en rapporte néanmoins aux portes qu'il jugera devoir prendre suivant les circonstances."

advantageously in action, but also in being able to follow and stop the enemy's ships in their flight after the action.

His Majesty expects above all that once the action has begun it will not be confined to an exchange of gun-fire<sup>1</sup>, and that M. de Court will use his utmost endeavours to take or burn as many of the enemy's ships as possible, and will not discontinue the action until he has gained a complete victory.

If, however, contrary to expectations it happens that no decision is arrived at in the earlier stages of the battle, and that the fleets get dispersed during or after the battle, on account of night, bad weather, or any other reason, His Majesty leaves it to M. de Court's discretion, according to the state of his ships, as to whether he goes in pursuit of the enemy with a view to continuing the action, or whether he returns to repair his ships after the action. But he should only adopt the latter alternative under absolute necessity, His Majesty preferring that he should pursue and again attack those of the enemy's ships which have suffered in the action, and which will not have, as have his own vessels, the resources of their own ports in which to refit.

In the case of his being obliged to come back to Toulon after an indecisive action, His Majesty desires that he will refit with the least possible delay, and that he will then proceed at once in search of the enemy, who will not have had his means of refitting, which should give him such an advantage as to assure the success of a second action.

He will send all captured vessels to Toulon, and he will arrange with the Commandant of the Province to lodge the Officers and men belonging to them in safe places. They will be considered as prisoners at the disposition of the King of Spain. He will see that the Officers are well treated and he will give the necessary orders for considerate treatment of the crews, both on shore and on board.

His Majesty also orders (*recommande*) him absolutely to prohibit pillage on board the prizes.

It may fall out that the English Admiral, knowing the two squadrons to be ready to leave Toulon, will not wait for them, and decides to leave Hyères and go to sea. In this case, His Majesty's ships will have gained this first advantage, viz. to free the navigation on the coasts of Provence and of Languedoc which will simplify the other operations confided to him by His Majesty; but before employing the two united squadrons on other destinations His Majesty hopes that if, after leaving Toulon, he finds that the English have left Hyères islands, he will make every endeavour to find them wherever he thinks they may be, and that if they retire to Port Mahon, he will pursue them as far as that port, and even attempt to entice them out to revenge the insults perpetrated by them outside Toulon.

He is, however, not to remain off Minorca for this object, nor is he to proceed any further; and His Majesty desires that he will return immediately and anchor his two squadrons off Hyères islands, where he will receive further orders from His Majesty.

<sup>1</sup> "On ne s'en tiendra pas à tirer du canon de part et d'autre."

Should he, in the course of his journey, meet detached English men-of-war or merchant ships His Majesty wishes him to understand that they are not to be attacked by French ships and that the Spaniards are to be charged with their capture. He is, however, to remain near enough to support (*favouriser leur expédition*) and to assist them if necessary. He will issue distinguishing signals to the Captains of ships of both squadrons in view of their rejoining after having been separated.

Sieur Charron, commissary of the Navy on board the 'Terrible' is to be given all help and facilities to carry out his duties.

He (*M. de Court*) will conform with the orders, regulations, etc., regarding general order and police regulations on board ship.

VERSAILLES, 11 *January* 1744.

### APPENDIX III

#### THE CHARGES AGAINST ADMIRAL MATHEWS

The trial of Admiral Mathews began on June 16th, 1746, and ended in Mathews's condemnation on the 22nd of October following. The nature of the charges preferred, and the decisions of the Court in each of them, are of such importance in themselves to the proper understanding of the tactical lessons to be learned from this battle, that brief recapitulation of their nature will be made.

The charge against Admiral Mathews was set out at great length, in a series of fifteen articles drawn by the Attorney-General. Of these, the first thirteen contained specific accusations, the fourteenth was a recapitulation of those preceding, and the fifteenth a general charge assigning to Mathews the principal responsibility for the miscarriage of February 11th and the succeeding days. In the following summary a short précis is given concerning each article, first, as to the nature of the charge it preferred; then, of Mathews's written answer to that charge; and finally of the decision made by the Court and whether that decision was unanimous or by majority.

*Article 1.* This stated that it was the practice of all Admirals to hold councils of war; but that Mathews throughout the month of February, 1744, even on those days when the enemy was in sight—the 8th to the 13th—did not "call or assemble together a council of war, consistent to the constant practice of all Admirals and Commanders-in-Chief, and to the great danger of his Majesty's fleet."

To this Mathews replied that there was not any instruction of his Majesty or Rule of the Navy directing councils of war to be held; it rested with the Admiral to hold such councils or not as he should judge expedient.

The Court agreed unanimously that there being no positive general

instructions directing councils of war to be held, the charge was not criminal in itself; but that a Commander-in-Chief who had opportunity, as Mathews had, of calling councils and neglects to do so "makes himself the more strictly accountable for consequences."

*Article 2.* Mathews was herein accused of not appointing necessary and proper signals, particularly night signals for bringing to, keeping in a line of battle, engaging, chasing and giving over chase; and that he did not make the night signal to bring to on the evening of the 10th, by which the weather-most ships were to bring to first, nor make a night signal, form the line of battle, bring to and keep in the line.

Mathews replied that he made all the necessary and usual signals as contained in the book of Sailing and Fighting Instructions: and that, while the night signal for bringing to did direct the weather-most ships to bring to first, this did not absolve Lestock from blame in bringing to so far to windward; for the object in the order was to prevent ships running foul of each other, and on that night there was no possible danger of their doing so.

The Court found that as a body of General Printed Instructions was provided, no Commander-in-Chief could be censured judicially for omitting to make additions to them. "Nevertheless it is incumbent on him to make his signals in so plain and distinct a manner that no mistake or misapprehension of them may arise in the fleet." No direction was given to the fleet on the night of the 10th February by the night signal then made, to form the line of battle, and to bring to and keep in the line; and the day signal for forming the line abreast ceased to be a signal by ceasing to be visible.

*Article 3.* Mathews was by this article accused of making sail and bearing down on the enemy without giving sufficient time either for Rowley's or Lestock's divisions to come up to form and close the line; and that, though he had sent Lieutenant Jasper to inform Lestock that he would wait until the rear could come up, he neither shortened sail nor lay by with the centre to enable him to do so "contrary to discipline, in breach of his duty and to the great danger of his Majesty's fleet."

The Admiral acknowledged that both van and rear, particularly the latter, were to windward when he made sail; but he would have made sail sooner if Lestock had not been so great a distance from him, "which distance was the true cause why I was prevented from bringing the combined fleet to a general engagement." He denied that he sent any such message by Jasper, nor made so much sail as to gain on Lestock, "but, on the contrary, went with an easy sail, often yawing my ship to and fro on purpose to give him and his division time to get into their station."

The Court agreed unanimously that "it did not appear that the Admiral did not give sufficient time for the van to come up"; but that he did not lie by or shorten sail enough for the rear to do so. "Nevertheless the Court are not of the opinion that the Admiral by bearing down on the combined fleets in the morning with the centre and van did act contrary to discipline, or in breach of his duty, or that he thereby brought his Majesty's fleet into great danger," because the centre and van of the British fleet were at least equal to that part of the combined fleet that extended from the Spanish



Admiral's second astern to the leader of the van. Nor did it appear that the message sent by Jasper was as set out in the charge.

*Article 4.* The charge in this article was that Mathews made the signal to engage before the fleet was ready and formed in line of battle, "whereupon the combined fleets did crowd sail and stretch to the southward in order to gain the wind of his Majesty's fleet or to draw the said fleet to join battle in fight at a disadvantage." By not using the means which were in his power Mathews did not form or keep his fleet in a line which it was his duty to have done.

Mathews admitted that the fleet was not in a line when he made the signal to engage, "but my reason for acting in that manner was obvious and plain, being drove to the necessity of it by Mr Lestock's extraordinary behaviour" in bringing to to windward the night before, and not making sail in the morning in spite of two messages sent to him. Still, "I did not make the signal for engaging, till the French edged away and went from me, and the Spanish admiral got his main tack aboard and was crowding to join the French; and that I was fully convinced I had no chance of bringing the French to action, unless by making the signal for engaging and bearing down at the same time upon the ten sail of Spaniards...by which means I was in hopes to have obliged the French admiral to have lain to, and thereby to have brought on an engagement with the van and centre."

The Court, by 17 votes to 2, found that Mathews did make the signal to engage before the fleet was formed in line of battle, contrary to discipline and the usual practice of flag officers commanding in chief; "but though the French crowding sail might be a consequence of that signal yet it does not follow that the consequence was necessary";—a remark the exact meaning of which is not very clear<sup>1</sup>.

*Article 5.* In this Mathews was accused, first, that he did not steer such a course as would bring his van against the van of the enemy in obedience to the 19th Article of the Fighting Instructions<sup>2</sup>; thereby endangering the van of the British fleet by exposing it to the van and centre of the enemy "contrary to discipline, the signal of the line of battle then abroad, and the Fighting Instructions, to the great danger of his Majesty's fleet."

Mathews replied that he did comply with Article 19 as long as it lay in his power; but as the French under topsails drew away from him he considered it necessary to act as he did, as he had already explained in his answer to the fourth charge, "judging it absolutely necessary for his Majesty's service to come to an engagement with any part of the fleet I could come at tho, in never so irregular a manner, before the junction of the Brest squadron took place, which was, by all my intelligences, hourly expected."

There was considerable difference of opinion on this charge. The Court first considered whether Mathews steered a proper course to bring his van

<sup>1</sup> Mathews's *reasons* for bearing down did not form the subject of consideration. What was deemed important was that he did bear down "contrary to discipline"

<sup>2</sup> "If the admiral and his fleet have the wind of enemy and they have stretched themselves in a line of battle the van of the admiral's fleet is to steer with the van of the enemy's and there to engage them" (Russell's 18th article of 1691).

and centre against those of the enemy. By 14 votes to 5 they decided that he did not. Of those dissenting, four said "He did not by the consequence; whether the courses he steered had a tendency to it, can't possibly determine." And the fifth, "He did, till he saw the French make sail to go away from him, but not all the day."

Next, the Court discussed whether he had it in his power to bring the van and centre against those of the enemy; and decided, by the same majority, that he had.

Following this a further question was put; after the French Admiral made sail and went away from the British fleet, did the Admiral act in breach of his duty and bring the fleet into improper danger, by bearing down on the Spanish Admiral? It was agreed, by 11 to 8, that he did.

*Article 6.* In this article the accusation against Mathews was that by bearing away to attack the 'Real' he brought all the ships from the 'Princess Caroline' to the 'Dunkirk' (fifteen ships) into action with the Spanish squadron (seven ships), thereby leaving only eight ships of the British van to attack eighteen or nineteen ships of the enemy's centre and van<sup>1</sup>—an unequal distribution of force "contrary to discipline, in breach of his duty, the Fighting Instructions, and to the great danger of his Majesty's fleet."

To this Mathews replied that he did not comprehend how his bearing down on the Spanish Admiral must necessarily have had this result. If the five Spaniards ahead of the 'Real' had remained in company with their flag, the five ships of the centre division ahead of 'Namur'<sup>2</sup> would have been enough for them without the assistance of any of the van ships<sup>3</sup>, and the whole of Rowley's division could have engaged the French van (twelve to sixteen), a British inferiority of four ships only; and he emphatically repeated his previous statement that he was obliged to act in this manner for the reasons he had already given.

The Court agreed unanimously that if every ship of the British fleet had placed herself against the respective ship of the enemy's line, the combined fleet would have extended no more than four ships beyond the British; and, by 14 votes to 5 agreed that this charge was not proved. One dissident, Captain Frankland, said "by bearing down on the 'Real' the van of His Majesty's fleet was directed to attack the van and centre of the combined fleet which were greater in number and was contrary to duty and discipline and in breach of the Fighting Instructions." The part played by Rowley in causing the crowding by his choice of the 'Terrible' as antagonist was not referred to<sup>4</sup>.

*Article 7.* Mathews was here accused of shooting ahead, hauling and remaining out of action in the 'Namur' soon after engaging the 'Real,' leaving the 'Marlborough' hard pressed by 'Real' and 'Hércules'; of giving no assistance to the 'Marlborough' himself, nor ordering any other ship to her aid; thus withdrawing himself and withholding his own ship and those of his division from the fight.

<sup>1</sup> Actually sixteen French and two Spaniards.

<sup>2</sup> 'Norfolk,' 'Princessa,' 'Somerset,' 'Dragon' and 'Bedford.'

<sup>3</sup> Cf. diagrams 3 and 4 (pp. 21, 25), which shew the situation.

<sup>4</sup> *Vide* pp. 33, 54.

To this serious charge Mathews replied that he did shoot ahead, but not in the manner set forth. The reason was to prevent a collision with 'Marlborough,' "which (considering the great swell) might have proved fatal to us both." His ship was then much damaged aloft; he could see that some of the British van were engaged, "therefore judged it proper to put my ship in a condition to make sail ahead, had the action become general," leaving the seven Spaniards astern to be dealt with by Lestock. He had seen the 'Marlborough's' masts go by the board and had ordered 'Dorsetshire' to assist 'Marlborough.' He considered that a Commander-in-Chief was not "tied down to any particular station, but may alter his situation as he judges most prudent for the good of the service, if I erred in judgement I am sorry for it; but I conceive I did not; for had the engagement become general in the van it would have been highly imprudent in me not to have gone with some of the ships of my division which were astern of me to the assistance of the van." Aware as he was of the enemy's superiority in that part, he added bitterly, that in such a case he would have been told that there was a British force astern of sufficient force to deal with the seven Spaniards, and would have been deservedly censured.

The crux of the accusation lay in whether he had withheld from the fight. The Court were first asked whether the charge were proved in whole or in part. It was agreed, by 13 to 6, that it was proved in part. It was unanimously agreed that Mathews remained in close engagement about an hour before he shot ahead, and by 12 to 6 (1 doubtful) that his shooting ahead was not an attempt to run out of action, but was due to the danger of the 'Marlborough's' running on board him. But it was unanimously agreed that the 'Namur' was not incapable of returning to the assistance of the 'Marlborough,' and (by 12 to 7) that it was the Admiral's duty so to do, though he had four ships inactive astern. It was agreed<sup>1</sup> that he had sent orders to 'Dorsetshire' to help 'Marlborough,' but that he did not send them directly he shot ahead (18 to 1), nor in sufficient time for her relief (14 to 5 votes), and that no ship did actually go to help her.

Thus the gravamen of the charge on which the majority was agreed was that Mathews could have returned, should have done so, did not, nor did send any other ship soon enough. From the way in which the questions hinging on this point were asked it is clear that the Court attached great importance to it.

*Article 8.* This, set out at great length, represented that after the 'Ann' blew up, when Mathews had fourteen ships still in hand<sup>2</sup>, he did not take steps to destroy the five Spaniards in the rear; that he kept back himself and connived at the "notorious breaches of duty" of others under his command; that he did not relieve the captains of their commands; that he lost so good an opportunity of destroying the five ships, and that he exposed the 'Marlborough' to great danger.

<sup>1</sup> With one dissentient, who was doubtful.

<sup>2</sup> 'Berwick,' 'Kingston,' 'Salisbury,' 'Guernsey,' 'Oxford,' 'Dragon,' 'Somerset,' 'Princessa,' 'Norfolk,' 'Namur,' 'Dorsetshire,' 'Essex,' 'Rupert,' 'Royal Oak.'



Mathews replied, first, that there were ten, not five, Spanish ships<sup>1</sup>. He called attention to the fact that care was taken not to mention any of Lestock's division, though it was in the Vice-Admiral's power to have engaged five of the enemy; and said "I confess it is past my understanding to know" what was meant in saying that he had it in his power to dispose of the fourteen ships for the destruction of the five Spaniards.

He denied absolutely that he connived at any breaches of duty, "for in my situation I could not pretend to judge whether the 'Essex,' 'Rupert' and 'Royal Oak' were within point blank shot," and that he had no knowledge from personal observation or otherwise of the behaviour of the captains.

The Court unanimously agreed that the Admiral had not made such dispositions after the battle had begun, as to engage the enemy with as much advantage as he might have done; that he might, and ought, to have seen the neglect of duty of the ships astern; and that he did see it, and did connive at the breaches of duty of their captains, and failed to send for those captains and appoint others in their room.

*Article 9.* Mathews was accused of not giving orders before the action to the captain of the fireship to prime, but sent her down in the middle of the action, unready and improperly primed with loose powder; that he neglected to cover her approach with the 'Namur' or any other ship; and that as a result of this neglect the 'Ann' blew up unsuccessfully, the 'Real' was not burnt, and the Spanish ships astern were not hindered from getting ahead.

The Admiral affirmed in his defence that he had given orders to Captain Mackie by nine in the morning; that he had to send twice to the 'Ann' to comply with his orders to attack; that he sent orders to the 'Dorsetshire' to cover her, himself in the 'Namur' going down at the same time.

The Court unanimously found the charge proved in part, but not in whole. They agreed that timely orders to prime were given by Mathews, and that he gave orders to 'Dorsetshire' to cover the 'Ann's' attack, but did not send them soon enough; that she did not go down, but that the 'Namur' herself did bear down while the 'Ann' was on her way, but did not go down with her and cover her, so that the 'Ann' was not covered. She blew up without doing execution, and the miscarriage arose "from the neglect of sending some ship in due time to cover and conduct her." All these decisions were either unanimous or by a majority of 18 to 1.

*Article 10.* The charge herein was that when Rowley with the van tacked, crowded sail and ran from the French squadron after they had gone about, Mathews hauled down the signal for the line and bore to the northward abandoning the disabled and captured 'Poder' with a British prize crew on board; that he plyed to windward all night, sending out no frigates to observe the motions of the enemy, with the result that at daylight on the 12th the British fleet was four, five or six leagues to windward of the enemy, and was therefore unable to get up to and engage them on the 12th.

Mathews's answer was that as it was almost dark, and the British van, followed by the French, were standing towards him, "common prudence made it necessary for me to wear in order to prevent putting the fleet into

<sup>1</sup> See diagrams 5 and 6 (pp. 31, 39).



confusion"; that he made the signal for leaving off chase to prevent a separation of the fleet, and then, renewing the signal for the line, jogged on with an easy sail, engaging the five stern-most Spanish ships. He quitted the 'Poder' as he could not avoid doing so; she was totally disabled, and there was neither time nor wind to take her in tow; it would have been highly imprudent for Rowley to have attempted to bring off a night engagement. The Rear-Admiral could not have done so without going two miles to leeward of the line, and this he could not do without signal as it would have been a breach of the 21st article of the Fighting Instructions<sup>1</sup>. Mathews defended himself strongly against the charge that he crowded sail from the enemy. He admitted that he sent out no ships to observe the enemy during the night of the 11th as it would have been hazardous in the confused state of affairs and also because of the foulness of his ships, while the enemy's were clean.

The Court found that he did stand from the enemy, but did not crowd sail, by 13 votes to 1, five members being doubtful; that the French squadron came to the northward both in pursuit of Rowley and to relieve the Spaniards in the rear<sup>2</sup>; that they did not fire into the ships of Rowley's division as they passed, and after passing them bore away towards the rear. The Court was divided in opinion as to whether Mathews wore before the French bore away under Rowley's rear (nine saying he did, ten doubtful). The 'Poder' was then in British possession, and though it did not appear that any report was made to Mathews, he was in a situation to see the British colours on board her (yes, 14; no, 1; doubtful, 4). The enemy's fleet did not bear down and retake her before Mathews had forsaken her; but he retired with an easy sail; there was a great swell and little wind and several ships had not wind enough to be under command; by daybreak, however, the distance was increased from musket shot to about four leagues, and the Admiral could not throughout the 12th, get up and engage the enemy (he could not, 15 votes; he could, 3; doubtful, 1).

*Article 11.* This charge related to the failure to press the pursuit. It stated that though the night of the 12th was fine and fair with moonlight, and the British fleet had the enemy in sight in loose order and could see the 'Real' in tow, yet Mathews forbore to chase, and lay to; nor did he send out cruisers to watch the enemy.

Mathews admitted that the enemy was in sight, the Spaniards distant about 3 leagues, the French 4 to 5 miles, and the 'Real' in tow of 'Isabel.' But several of his ships were damaged, he had gained little, and saw no prospect of overhauling the enemy. "I therefore brought to, judging it of much greater consequence to his Majesty's service to return to the coasts of France and Italy than to pursue one disabled ship, then at such a distance from me as to make it very doubtful whether I could have got up with her had I continued the chase<sup>3</sup>."

<sup>1</sup> That none of the ships of the fleet shall pursue any small number of the enemy's ships till the main body be disabled or run.

<sup>2</sup> 11 considered the French stood that way for both purposes, six that they came to relieve the rear. Captain Hanway said, "Don't know their design, but by consequences, it is plain, to the relief and assistance of the rear."

<sup>3</sup> The rest of his reasoning has been given in the narrative.

The Court agreed unanimously that he saw, pursued and gained upon the enemy on the 12th, and brought to in the evening, sending out no cruiser. That there was not so large a part of his fleet disabled as to make it unsafe or imprudent to continue in chase that evening; he was superior to the enemy, and it did not appear to the Court that there was any justifiable reason for bringing to; he made sail again at half-past 2 a.m.; but by bringing to as he had done, and sending out no cruiser, he did forbear and keep back from the pursuit of the enemy retreating, contrary to his instructions and the Articles of War. These decisions were unanimous.

*Article 12.* Mathews was accused of having burnt the 'Poder' when she might have been saved and towed by a frigate to Minorca.

He replied he did not consider it his duty to preserve her, which would have cost him the service of a frigate.

The Court unanimously found that in burning her he did not act contrary to his orders.

*Article 13.* This dealt with his failure to continue the pursuit on the 13th, accusing him of withdrawing and keeping back, when, if he had continued the combined fleets must have either given up their lame ships or given battle.

Mathews admitted he had recalled Lestock; he did not recollect whether the enemy were seen from his ship, but supposing they had been seen he would not have pursued them for the reasons already given—his desire to prevent the invasion of Italy from Antibes.

Many questions of relative unimportance on details were put; the gist of the queries lay in this question.

"Is it the opinion of the Court that the circumstances of wind, weather and great distance of the Admiral from the enemy being considered, do justify him from bringing to, calling the Vice-Admiral and his division off the chase, and forbear the pursuit of the enemy on the 13th of February in the morning."

The Court was greatly divided. 11 considered that he was not justified, 8 that he was.

*Article 14.* This was a recapitulation of the preceding articles and was not discussed or voted upon.

*Article 15.* "That the said Thomas Mathews was guilty of divers notorious breaches of his duty, as Admiral and Commander of his Majesty's said fleet, upon the said 8th, 9th, 10th, 11th, 12th and 13th days of February, before, and during the engagement of his Majesty's fleet with the combined fleets of France and Spain in the Mediterranean Sea, and was a principal cause of the miscarriage."

Mathews to this said simply that he was not conscious of having been guilty of any breach of his duty, or of having been the principal or any part of the cause of the miscarriage.

The Court unanimously found that "by divers breaches in his duty" Mathews was a principal cause; that he fell under the 14th Article of War<sup>1</sup>, that he did not deserve death; that he should be cashiered and rendered incapable of any employ in his Majesty's service.

<sup>1</sup> One member said the 33rd.

## APPENDIX IV

## THE COURT MARTIAL ON ADMIRAL LESTOCK

The charges, preferred by Mathews against Admiral Lestock, were of the following nature:

(1) That when Mathews made the signal on the 10th February for the line abreast, Lestock did not obey it, but continued with his division six, five or at least four miles to windward.

(2) That on the evening of the 10th February when the enemy were one, two or at most three leagues distant, Lestock being still to windward, Mathews, to prevent the ships being too much extended and to permit Lestock to come up and close the line of battle, signalled to bring to, keeping the signal for the line abreast abroad. That Lestock disregarded this signal for the line of battle and brought his squadron to in disorder, at too great a distance from the remainder of the fleet.

(3) That by not closing, nor taking measures during the night to close, Lestock was still further from the main body on the following morning; and that when Mathews at daybreak made the signal for the line abreast again, Lestock did not endeavour to come up with his division into station.

(4) That Lestock did not make all the sail he could to get into station; that two Lieutenants were sent by Mathews to tell him to make all the sail he could; that he did not do so, nor detach any of his ships to join the line; that he shortened sail and reefed topsails and did not join the fight.

(5) That when Mathews made the signal and bore down to engage, Lestock did not do his utmost to do so likewise, though it lay in his power to have engaged the four rear ships if he had steered a proper course; nor did he give orders to any of his ships to come up and engage.

(6) That when the 'Namur' and 'Marlborough' were hard pressed Lestock, who could have given relief, did not do so.

(7) Finally, that Lestock was guilty of disobedience of Mathews's orders and was the principal cause of the miscarriage.

Lestock was acquitted on all these charges by a Court composed of two flag and fourteen senior officers. This finding is extraordinary in face of the evidence that was taken both in the form of depositions and cross questions. The evidence itself was, in a great many cases, of a highly unsatisfactory nature, even when full allowance is made for the necessarily inaccurate observation of witnesses who had neither time nor bearings by which to check their statements, and for forgetfulness of events which took place two years previously. Contradictory statements in such circumstances may well be expected; but the character of the contradictions and the manner in which some of the evidence is given, make it appear highly probable that there were witnesses who committed perjury. There is also clear evidence that tampering with logs took place, and both evidence and rumour that the tampering extended to persons. The log of the master of

the 'Neptune'—the officer who was one of Lestock's most important and most positive witnesses—has a large portion of the proceedings of the forenoon of February 11th obliterated, obviously intentionally, and other logs have been treated in a similar way and rewritten at a later date. Leaves were torn from the 'Buckingham's' log and entries were altered; the 'Revenge's' log was altered and so also was the 'Romney's'.<sup>1</sup> It was the custom for all witnesses to write and sign a deposition before the trial. Many depositions were rewritten, and parts unfavourable to Lestock were omitted in the second edition. It is curious to find in several cases more than one deposition written by a witness—an early one composed in his own words and sometimes containing statements highly unfavourable to the Vice-Admiral, and a later one written in a stereotyped form,—which have the appearance of having been drafted by Lestock and adopted for all the witnesses, who thus parrot-like repeat a string of statements, many of them bearing in no way on the case<sup>2</sup>. The depositions give no confidence that they express what their signatories saw, or that they are statements of fact. On the other hand the depositions for the prosecution are plain statements, written in a natural manner which convey an impression of honesty.

The officers who gave evidence against Lestock were of all ranks from captains downwards; those who gave evidence in his favour were principally masters and masters' mates. Two captains only, one of them his flag captain, testified with any vigour in his support, and rumour, though an untrustworthy guide, had it that for some time previous to the trial Lestock had been busy entertaining those masters and mates who were subsequently his witnesses, at his house in London. Thus not only were the witnesses for the prosecution men who by their standing were less open to evil influences and more capable of giving an accurate description of the proceedings, but the evidence itself is of a better and more reputable character, free from faked log books, altered depositions and exaggerated professions.

When we pass from the character of the witnesses and the tendency of their evidence to the evidence itself we cannot but draw some startling conclusions. The Vice-Admiral was accused of having brought to on the night of the 10th "six, five or at least four miles to windward and astern of his station." This he denied, saying that he brought to in line; and the Court found that he was if anything to *leeward*. Yet while the evidence for the prosecution was most definite on this point—and the description of the battle will have shewn how greatly this point affected the operations on the 11th—the defence, in addition to denying that he did so, argued that he was right in doing that which he denied that he did.

The following are typical extracts from evidence that Lestock brought to as he was accused of having done.

"He must have been to the N.E. of the Admiral about six or seven miles." (*Captain Powlett, 'Oxford.'*)

"None of the Vice-Admiral's line were in the line when brought to":

<sup>1</sup> Evidence of Lieut. Prescott of 'Buckingham,' Barber of 'Revenge' and others.

<sup>2</sup> E.g. they express opinions on tactics which have nothing to do with the facts of the battle.



thinks they might have been by continuing under sail a little longer. (*Lieut. Mountford, 'Buckingham.'*)

"The Vice-Admiral brought to four or five miles from the Admiral's division who were a long way on the starboard bow" (the ships heads were south). (*Lieut. Mountagu, 'Buckingham.'*)

"The Vice-Admiral brought to not properly closed, nor in a line." (*Lieut. Marriott Arbuthnot, 'Somerset.'*)

"The Vice-Admiral was not in a line nor closed when he brought to." (*Captain Knowler, 'Namur.'*)

"The Vice-Admiral brought to to windward and astern." (*Lieut. Tiddeman, 'Revenge.'*)

"The Vice-Admiral was not in a line nor closed when he brought to; the 'Dunkirk' [the ship ahead of 'Cambridge,' and leader of the rear division] was at least  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles from the rear ship of the centre." (*Capt. Drummond, 'Cambridge.'*)

Similar evidence was given by Captains Marsh, Godsolve, Towry, Berkeley, Hon. John Forbes, Russell, Henry Osborn; Lieuts. Prescott, Crickett, Bentley, Jones, Tom, Fortescue, le Cras, Evans, Barker, Kearney, Bicknell; Masters Griffith and Moore. Yet with all this on one side and no serious denial on the other, the Court found that he was in his proper place, or if anything to leeward of it, when he brought to.

A further article of the charge against the Vice-Admiral was that he did not make all the sail he could on the 11th to get into station, and though two boats were sent to him with messages to make all the sail he could, that he shortened sail and reefed topsails. On this point, though there was the most contradictory evidence, the preponderance of the evidence was to the effect that he did not make all the sail he could. Lestock in one place denied that he shortened sail at all on the 11th until the signal was made to leave off chase; in another he admitted taking in his topmast studding-sails to allow the 'Torbay' to get into station—statements which contradict each other. But the evidence for the prosecution went further than taking in studding-sails and definitely stated that he lowered his yards and reefed. Captain Powlett said that the 'Neptune's' topsails were lowered and he believed they were reefed "as were most of the ships in the Vice-Admiral's division, following the Admiral's motions." The 'Buckingham' herself reefed<sup>1</sup>, and during the first part of the forenoon was only under her foresail, topsails and some staysails—canvas which does not represent an ardent attempt to get up into action.

"Some time after the signal to make more sail was made the Vice-Admiral lowered his topsails, manned his yards and appeared to reef" (*Lieut. Mountagu*).

"He did not set all his sails, had no lower studding-sails set, and his topmast studding-sails were sometimes hauled down" (*ibid.*).

"The Vice-Admiral lowered his topsails, clewed up his topgallant sails and reefed, and all the ships of the division took in a reef" (*Lieut. Prescott*).

"The Vice-Admiral had his topsails lowered, topgallant sails clewed up

<sup>1</sup> Evidence of Powlett, Mountford, Prescott and Crickett.

and he reefed: and the 'Somerset's' topsails had a reef in all day" (*Marriott Arbuthnot*).

"The Vice-Admiral did not make all the sail he could...and I remarked 'what can be the reason he don't make more sail'" (*Captain Marsh, 'Winchelsea'*).

Many other witnesses gave similar evidence, including several captains. On the other hand, witnesses in the 'Neptune,' among them her Captain, swore that her topsail yards were never unslung all day. The evidence for the prosecution was dismissed, and the charge that Lestock shortened sail was put aside, the Court saying "it was sworn to by few, positively or circumstantially"—a most surprisingly inaccurate statement in view of the testimonies which are in black and white to the contrary. And, what is even more striking, the Court added the rider that even if Lestock had reefed he would have been correct to do so, as the Admiral had shortened sail.

The charge that Lestock did not do his utmost to join the fight, and that it was in his power so to do, was decided by the Court in Lestock's favour. Yet twenty-six witnesses gave definite opinions that he could have joined if he made more sail and steered a different course, among them five captains—Powlett, Berkeley, Marsh, Godsalve and Towry—and two others, Drummond and Long, who said respectively that he could have come into action if he made more sail and if he had not hauled his wind. Sixteen Lieutenants and two Masters gave evidence to the same effect. For the defence three Lieutenants, some masters and mates gave evidence; and Lestock's own admission that he took in sail to allow the 'Torbay' to come up is by itself sufficiently conclusive that he did not make every endeavour to bring his ships up into action.

Attention must be drawn to one further point which illustrates the extraordinary partiality shewn to the Vice-Admiral in his trial. To the accusation that Lestock's conduct was one of the principal causes of the miscarriage, the Court said: "If the Vice-Admiral's whole division had been absolutely away and the four sternmost ships of the enemy (who were of no more service in the engagement to the enemy than the Vice-Admiral's division was to his Majesty's fleet) had also been excluded, the rest of his Majesty's ships would still have remained superior to the rest of the combined fleet." The statement is true enough: but that it should be employed on such an occasion as this and made to serve to palliate the conduct of an officer, is such a travesty of administration of justice that one can hardly regard any of the other findings as honest and untinged by partisanship.

## APPENDIX V

INSTRUCTIONS TO MARSHAL SAXE<sup>1</sup>

*Memoir of the King, to provide instructions to the Sieur Comte de Saxe, Commander-in-Chief of a body of troops which His Majesty is sending into England*

Comte de Saxe is informed of His Majesty's resolution no longer to recognise the Elector of Hanover as King of England, and of the reasons which have decided him to take this resolution.

He is also aware that a great number of the subjects of the highest nobility in England, well affected to their legitimate King, have had recourse to the protection of His Majesty in order to assist them to re-establish James III on the throne that belongs to him, and that His Majesty, having decided to grant them the assistance of the troops, arms and ammunition they have asked for and with which they consider themselves able to bring his Kingdom back to obedience, has taken measures to embark the said troops, arms and ammunition and stores at Dunkirk on board transport ships which will be escorted by some of His Majesty's ships under the command of Sieur de Barailh, chef d'escadre of his naval forces.

Comte de Saxe should also know that the King has sent another squadron of his ships, commanded by Comte de Roquefeuil, into the Channel to seek and engage the English men-of-war which own allegiance to the Elector of Hanover, and at the same time to prevent the said ships from going to Dunkirk in order to oppose the passage of the convoy that will carry His Majesty's troops into England.

Sieur de Barailh, who is directed to escort the convoy with the squadron under his command, has orders to communicate his instructions to Comte de Saxe, and to act in concert with him in all that concerns the disembarkation of the troops on the English coast.

The Sieur Bart<sup>2</sup>, chef d'escadre, who has been directed by His Majesty to prepare the vessels necessary for their transport at Dunkirk, similarly has orders to concert with Comte de Saxe in everything that relates to their embarkation.

Some English naval officers well affected to King James have been sent to Dunkirk from England with some pilots acquainted with the Thames who will assist to conduct the convoy in that river. Other well affected persons will be sent to Dunkirk, who will inform M. de Saxe of the arrangements that will have been made in the country and of the measures that should have been taken there for the reception of His Majesty's troops and to bring about the Revolution that is counted upon taking place directly after the disembarkation.

<sup>1</sup> J. Colin, *Louis XV et les Jacobites* (p. 58).

<sup>2</sup> He was the son of the celebrated Jean Bart, and was commandant at Dunkirk.

Although it has been considered expedient that the landing should take place in the river of London, the place has not been precisely defined, as circumstances might alter and render it more or less easy in one part than in another. However, as it is important that it should be made as near to the city of London as possible, His Majesty has ordered M. de Barailh to carry the convoy as far up the river as possible, even to Blackwall, provided insurmountable difficulties should not be found; upon this question he will consult with M. de Saxe, and His Majesty intends that when they are in those parts, they shall both take the advice of the most experienced persons who will be sent on board to inform them at the same time of the arrangements that will be made at the places where the troops can be disembarked.

The cannon, arms, ammunition and stores which will have been carried in the ships of the squadron will be put ashore at the same time and placed at M. de Saxe's disposal to make such use of as he thinks fit, in concert with the persons of most credit and authority in the country.

If he has need of provisions from the squadron for the subsistence of the troops ashore after the disembarkation, M. de Barailh has orders to furnish him with whatever quantity he asks for.

M. de Barailh is recommended in his instructions to return to sea as soon as he possibly can after the disembarkation is completed, and not to remain in the Thames unless indispensable necessity for him to do so exists, or M. de Saxe absolutely requires him to do so. His Majesty relies in this matter on his prudence, being convinced that he will be well enough acquainted with the dangers to which the ships will be exposed in the river, not to retain them there except upon absolute necessity.

In any unforeseen circumstances in which it may be necessary to take important steps in the service of His Majesty, M. de Barailh is ordered to conform to everything that shall be resolved upon in the councils, to which M. de Saxe shall call the general officers and others whom he may consider proper.

The landing having been made, and the disposition of the country being found favourable, M. de Saxe will enter with his troops as into a friendly country, making them live in good discipline, exacting nothing, contenting themselves with whatever they are offered by the well affected subjects of King James, and paying for all that is necessary for the subsistence of his troops.

M. de Saxe will subordinate himself without difficulty to King James or the Prince of Wales, and will act in concert with whomsoever is vested with the powers of His Britannic Majesty.

When the French troops shall have entered the city of London, whither they will march immediately after disembarkation, the principal object of M. de Saxe should be to maintain himself there in order that in case of a civil war he may there uphold the interests of the Kingdom.

Whatever, however, may be the outcome of a civil war, M. de Saxe will throughout look upon all those who do not take the part of King James as enemies, and even though the greater number of English may take the opposite side, he will treat them as enemies, attacking them and employing all the rights of war.



Nevertheless, if the party of King James should become so weakened as to be unable to maintain itself in any way, in such a case M. de Saxe is empowered to treat for the return of his troops to France, and His Majesty leaves it to his zeal and prudence to make the most honourable terms.

His Majesty may send further orders according to circumstances, and desires to be informed exactly and by all kinds of channels of all that happens.

END OF VOLUME TWO

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